Precision and Soul
The Relationship between Science and Religion in the Operas Wozzeck and Arabella

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PRECISION AND SOUL

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SCIENCE AND RELIGION IN THE OPERAS *WOZZECK* AND *ARABELLA*

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I mean, I'm not religious
But I do believe that there simply cannot be all this, like, order
Mm
All this structure and, you know, design around us
without some sort of deeper meaning behind it all
Something profound
Yes
BOOM-SHAK-A-LAK
Apache Indian
Y'know?
Oh absolutely
Stephen Collins COLILLO.com

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ABSTRACT

Some varieties of modernism are thought of as an attempt to re-enchant a technologized world that has lost touch with spiritual modes of being. Instead here I start from the assumption that the various religious categories never went away, but just reappeared in different guises. In *Wozzeck* and *Arabella*, their authors succeeded not in re-enchantment, but in creating innovative aesthetic structures to house the new distributions of the sacred occasioned by science.

The connection of Berg's music with science has been approached via his interest mysticism and pseudo-science. However, it is now thought that occultism was one way in which artists could absorb difficult ideas from mathematics and science. The aim here is consider *Wozzeck* in terms of these source ideas, rather than the second-hand version in which they were imbibed. Strauss has always been criticised for the superficiality or kitschiness of his music; recently this assessment has been upgraded to one of 'postmodern irony'. Neither of these is satisfactory in the case of *Arabella*, and here I explain why. The main theoretical concerns are: (1) to escape from the relativism and constructivism of the linguistic turn, by finding ways of incorporating 'truth' into critical methodology; (2) to treat art not just as a semiotic system that can be interpreted, but also as an intricate bundle of affects and percepts that offers an aesthetic experience. The thesis comprises two stand-alone, although related, parts.

Part I. The first two chapters show how Büchner's ambivalent attitude to Enlightenment rationality in the 1830s made a new kind of sense to German audiences in the 1910s, which is why Berg was moved to set the piece, and why his interpretation departs more from the Büchner original vision than is usually acknowledged. Chapter 3 uses Heidegger's notion of 'the mathematical' to demonstrate how the opera defamiliarizes the scientific mode of perception that characterizes the modern mind. Chapter 4 reassesses the treatment of individual and supra-individual subjectivity in *Wozzeck*, showing that at moments Wozzeck is as free as contemporary science allows him to be.

Part II. The fifth and sixth chapters contend that, despite Hofmannsthal and Strauss's well-documented differences on artistic and religious matters, their approach to metaphysics in art was surprisingly compatible. Chapter 7 considers the operatic precedents that Strauss drew on in *Arabella*, particularly *Tannhäuser* and *Parsifal*, to argue that his supposedly non-metaphysical music still sets up a division between sacred and profane. Chapter 8 shows that, although *Arabella* looks like 1920s rom-com, it actually modelled a symbolic, mythical and ritual practice that allowed its audience to transcend the commercial representation of romance.

A Sort of Introduction

This thesis is motivated by the belief that the human being is both a religious and a scientific/technological animal, and the conviction that social organization is most successful when it recognizes both and strikes a balance between them. In the turbulent period of history under consideration, Germany and Austria from the 1910s to the 1930s, the question of the relationship between rationality and irrationality was addressed in some way by most public intellectuals. It was certainly important, if not central, for each of the four artists focused on here and, although the collaborative, or synthetic nature of each opera means no unified intention could be said to exist for either, it is still possible to read each as a coherent intervention in this debate. The primary purpose of this investigation, then, is to patch together the often contradictory bundle of ideas about the relationship between science and religion in the content of each opera, in order to render the perceptual and affective experience of the work into a legible philosophical position that would have been understood by contemporary thinkers.

The secondary purpose is more present oriented. In the past decade or so the critical musicology that showed so much promise in the 1980s and 90s has petered out and most historical musicology seems to ignore the difficult philosophical and aesthetic questions in favour of a safe historical positivism. In a passage from an essay that will be important in Chapter 3, Heidegger says:

> The characteristic of positivism […] is that it thinks it can manage sufficiently with facts, or other and new facts, while concepts are merely expedients that one somehow needs but should not get too involved with, since that would be philosophy. Furthermore the comedy – or rather the tragedy – of the present situation in science [and one may easily substitute 'musicology' in 2013 here] is that one thinks to overcome positivism through positivism.[1]

[1] Martin Heidegger, *Die Frage nach dem Ding* [Winter semester, 1935/6], (Tübingen: Max Niemayer Verlag, 1962), 50-83. Printed in translation as 'Modern Science, Metaphysics and Mathematics' in *Basic Writings*, ed. David Farrell Krell (London: Routledge, 1993), 271-305; 272.

To be sure, there are very good reasons why critique 'ran out of steam', to quote Bruno Latour, and it is hardly a problem confined to musicology.[2] But at the same time, the resurgence of religious fundamentalism, the impending environmental disaster and the conspicuous failure of neo-liberal economics has meant that there has been a whole raft of conceptual innovation in critical theory to draw on, and there is no need to return to the worn out language of identity politics, deconstruction, the hermeneutics of suspicion, and so on. It is not enough to present the case for importance of the reconciliation of scientific and aesthetic/religious thought by appeal only to arguments historically situated in Weimar Germany; in what E.O. Wilson might have called a 'one-culturist' approach, the aim here is to experiment with ways of introducing science into criticism, not just as constructed, historically contingent knowledge, but as something that has site-transcendent truth, and attempting in practice what I consider to be valuable in the art I am studying. [3]

The Divided Mind

In the decades before the First World War, a number of sociologists analysed the tensions in modern society in terms of various dichotomies that can all be considered to be specific versions of the broad science-religion split.[4] According to Ferdinand Tönnies, the human psyche was split into two types of consciousness: *Wesenswille*, which was 'natural', spontaneous and intuitive; and *Kürswille*, which was artificial, methodical, capable of 'rational calculation'. Social organization then depended on which of these dominated: the former lead to 'organic' communities, *Gemeinschaft*, bound by emotional bonds of kinship, shared history, shared values; the latter to modern civil society, *Gesellschaft*, in which 'free-standing individuals interacted with each other through self-interest, commercial contracts a "spatial" rather than a "historical" sense of mutual awareness, and the external constraints of formally enacted law'.[5] George Simmel, a crucial influence on Walter Benjamin (important in Chapter 4) and Siegfried Kracauer (Chapter 8), made explicit the connection between the impersonal nature of the economic relations in the modern metropolis – the 'indefinite collectivity' – and the abstraction of mathematical science: 'The calculating exactness of practical life which has resulted from a money economy corresponds to the ideal of natural science, namely that of transforming the world into an arithmetical problem and fixing every one of its parts in a mathematical formula'.[6] In his lecture *Science as Vocation*

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[2] Bruno Latour, 'Why Has Critique Run out of Steam? From Matters of Fact to Matters of Concern', *Critical Inquiry*, 30(2) (Winter 2004), 225-248.

[3] There are already signs that some musicologists are starting to treat science in this way: all the authors included in the special scientific issue of *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 64(3) (Fall 2011) use science as a critical tool in novel and interesting ways. But even there, none of them dared to challenge the orthodoxy that scientific knowledge is anything but a linguistic construct and therefore only relatively true.

[4] For a critique of these and other dichotomous theories of the development of industrial society, see Anthony Giddens, 'Classical Social Theory and the Origins of Modern Sociology', *American Journal of Sociology* 81 (1976), 703-29.

[5] Ferdinand Tonnies, *Community and Civil Society* (1887), ed. Jose Harris, trans. idem. and Margaret Hollis (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2001), xxi.

[6] Georg Simmel, *Die Großstadt und das Geistesleben* (1903). See David Frisby, *Georg Simmel* (London: Ellis Horwood Limited and Tavistock Publications, 1984), 131-2,148.

(*Wissenschaft als Beruf*) (1917), Max Weber equated 'disenchantment' (*Entzauberung*), the retreat of magical, mystical, sublime values from public life, with the 'belief that, *if one only wanted to*, one *could* find out at any time' the knowledge necessary to understand 'the conditions under which one lives', that 'one can, in principle, master all things by calculation'.[7] This had the result that the 'tension between the value-spheres of "science" and of "the holy" was unbridgeable' and that the potential scientist could only join the church by 'sacrificing his intellect'.[8] Public, monumental religion or art were, in Weber's view only likely to result in 'miserable monstrosities': only intimate art was possible and the only religious feeling was felt 'pianissimo' 'in personal human situations'.[9]

There is now plenty of empirical evidence that the human mind has cognitive apparatus that splits in this dichotomous way. In *Thinking Fast and Slow*, Daniel Kahneman summarizes the results of decades of psychological and cognitive science research into how judgement and decisions are made.[10] He argues that the mind operates with two distinct systems (which act like different 'agents'): System 1, which provides immediate, intuitive, emotional solutions to problems; and System 2, which deploys effortful, deliberative, rational thought. Iain McGilchrist, again drawing on research from a wide base, reopens the old question of the purpose of the brain's two hemispheres.[11] There is no truth to the popular belief that the left hemisphere is responsible for language and logical thought, and the left for vision, emotion and creativity; in fact, both are necessary for all these activities. Instead, the hemispheres offer two simultaneous experiences of the world which the individual combines in a variety of different ways. The world offered by the left hemisphere is governed by denotative language that simplifies and clarifies the world into fixed, explicit, perfect systems of knowledge which can be used to manipulate objects to achieve narrow goals. The price of this accuracy is that this world is lifeless and empty. The right, by contrast, yields a world of changing, connected, contextualized individuals. Nothing is perfectly understood or fully graspable in this world, but it is open and alive. His broad historical view recalls Adorno and Horkheimer's dialectic of enlightenment: since the 15th and 16th centuries the world has come to resemble one that the left hemisphere might have constructed, with the consequence that the explicit enlightenment goals of happiness and freedom have been met by their opposites: neuroses or mental illness and stifling micro-legislation.

As will become apparent, Büchner, Strauss, Hofmannsthal, Berg were all concerned with finding ways of bringing community back into society, or a sense of enchantment back into a world governed by number. If one agrees with something like McGilchrist's analysis of the current situation (and many of his conclusions do not differ a great deal from those of critical theorists like Žižek), then an investigation into how they went about achieving this has relevance in the present. The one potential stumbling block here, however, is the particular configuration of prejudices held by modern musicology.

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[7] Max Weber, 'Science as a Vocation' [1918] in *Max Weber's 'Science as a Vocation'*, ed. Peter Lassman, Irving Velody, Herminio Martins (London, Boston : Unwin Hyman, 1989), 3-34; 13, 30.
[8] Weber, 'Science as a Vocation', 29, 30.
[9] Weber, 'Science as a Vocation', 30.
[10] Daniel Kahneman, *Thinking Fast and Slow*, (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2011).
[11] Iain McGilchrist, *The Master and his Emissary: The Divided Brain and the Making of the Western World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009).

On the one hand, historical musicology is ruled by the categorising imperative of the *Kürswille*/System 2/left brain and is intolerant of implicitly understood terms like 'modernism', which must now be delimited temporally and geographically, and then further categorized into a host of different modernisms.[12] This is good for generating lots of accurate information, but when terms like 'naturalism' and 'expressionism' become lists of works from which general stylistic traits are then abstracted (the mathematical core of the scientific method, to be discussed in Chapter 3), they lose their aesthetic and philosophical content, and thereby close off sensual and interpretative modes of understanding – essential surely when the object of study is (or at least ought to be) art qua art. Ironically, at the same time as this positivism reigns in historical musicology, there is a rigidly enforced ban on considering the experience of music itself in a narrow, focussed way: structural listening is out and intuitive listening is in. But structural listening played an important part in the bourgeois period, when music – especially opera – was mainly consumed in the home from the written score.[13] In order to be sensitive to what our four cultural actors were doing in *Wozzeck* and *Arabella*, then, it will be necessary to be able to mediate between the structural and the immersive modes of listening, as well as big-picture and small-picture history.[14]

The Religious Animal

With reference to the process of secularization described by Weber, many cultural commentators have started to argue that we are now undergoing the reverse process of de-secularization or, stretching the historical analogy further back, of endarkenment.[15] One result of this is that the idea that there was ever a process of 'secularization' at all has been called into question.[16] The suspicion that jettisoning metaphysics altogether was a difficult if not impossible project was first voiced by Nietzsche, whose name is supposedly synonymous with anti-metaphysical thinking:

> *New Battles*. – After Buddha was dead, they still showed his shadow in a cave for centuries – a tremendous, gruesome shadow. God is dead; but given the way people are, there may still for

[12] Walter Frisch's *German Modernism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), which covers the precise period 1880-1920, is further dived into sections about 'ambivalent modernism', 'regressive modernism', 'historicist modernism', etc. The tactic earns its due with numerous insightful commentaries on well-known and not-so-well-known works, but it would be a pity if this became the only way of doing musicology.

[13] E.T.A. Hofmann, Eduard Hanslick and Theodor Adorno all advocated an emotionally detached manner of listening that saw music in terms of its structural rather than its immediate, emotional, sonic content. Realizing that the immersive, intuitive mode of listening is more common and more sensuously enjoyable, doesn't make the other type of listening any less important, especially in the case of composers like Brahms, Schoenberg and Berg who were writing with the expectation that the musically educated members of their audience would listen in this way. Dahlhaus shows, for example, how Brahms's late piano music is written on two levels: one for immersive listening and one for motivic-structural listening, and the two are so clearly separated that they need not interfere with one another: Carl Dahlhaus, *Nineteenth Century Music* [*Die Musik der 19. Jahrhunderts*, 1980] (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 258-60.

[14] To make this clear, I will distinguish between art-historical periods – Romanticism, Naturalism, Expressionism, Modernism – and philosophical terms – romanticism, naturalism, expressionism, modernism.)

[15] Philip S. Gorski, *The Post-Secular in Question: Religion in Contemporary Society* (New York: New York University Press, 2012).

[16] Craig Calhoun, Mark Juergensmeyer, Jonathan Van Antwerpen (eds), *Rethinking Secularism* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

> millennia be caves in which they show his shadow. – And we – we must still defeat his shadow as well! [17]

Although the Christian god had been 'defeated' by Enlightenment rationality, its 'gruesome shadow' still lingered in new religious forms, notably Wagnerian aesthetics, 'English' morality (i.e. Christian morality in a secular setting), idealism (especially in the Kantian/humanist notion of the free subject), and scientism (which came in two equally misguided flavours: realism and positivism). One could read this as meaning all metaphysics is over and off limits, and this certainly true if we consider Nietzsche's work only in the way it was (mis-)interpreted by poststructuralism. Charles Taylor makes the point, however, that Nietzsche's 'followers', i.e. the poststructuralists, did not engage with the same titanic battle as Nietzsche (and the existentialists Heidegger and Camus) to overcome metaphysics, but simply assumed their results as given.[18] But, Nietzsche's point in this passage, I would argue, is more delicate than simply proclaiming the end of metaphysics. [19] He is saying that the 'shadow of God' is not something that can be defeated, but must be defeated again and again as part of an interminable, continuous process. Human beings – 'given the way they are' – are incapable of apprehending the world without dividing it into secular and spiritual, inside and outside, finite and infinite, appearance and essence, profane and sacred, and so on. But since science has taught us that these distinctions are a property of the mind, of culture, of oppressive hierarchies, it is necessary to resist them wherever they are hostile to life – leaving open the possibility that such fictions might remain in place when they are beneficial to it.

Charles Taylor is not alone in seeing the metaphysical as a problem of continuous negotiation and struggle, rather than something that was settled with Newton and Darwin. Giorgio Agamben (whose exegesis of St Paul will form the theoretical backbone of Chapter 4), for example, has drawn on Carl Schmitt's political theology to show how modern institutions still perform the religious function of inclusion and exclusion.[20] In his discussion of racism, Žižek makes a similar point: the tendency to mark out groups as other – either by the racist, or by the well-intentioned multi-culturalist, for whom the 'other' is the racist – seems to be a function of an inbuilt human capacity.[21] He suggests that if there

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[17] Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, trans. Josafine Nauckhoff (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2001), 109. All Nietzsche's works are available online and so I am not providing the original German. For this reason, after each reference to Nietzsche I will provide a reference of the form (*GS* III, 108), which in this case means '*Gay Science*, Book III, Section 108'. This passage deliberately recalls the famous passage in Plato in which he likens reality to the shadows on a cave wall. (Plato, *The Republic*, Book VII, 514a-520a.)

[18] Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), 299, 589.

[19] He does this again in the section 'How the "True World" finally became a Fable' in Friedrich Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (London: Penguin, 1968), 40-41. (*TI* IV)

[20] See Schmitt's essays *Die Diktatur* (1921), *Politische Theologie* (1922) (in which he asserts that all significant concepts of the modern theory of the state are secularized theological concepts'), and *Der Begriff des Politischen* (1926), which Agamben draws on in his formulation of the theological distinction between 'life' and 'bare life' in *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* [1995], trans. Heller-Roazen (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press,1998).

[21] Slavoj Žižek, *Looking Awry: An Introduction to Jacques Lacan through Popular Culture* (Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1991), 165. Ethnic tension is caused, for Žižek, by a conflict of fantasies: the other structures their enjoyment in a different way from the self robbing it of the specificity of its fantasy.

weren't an anti-Christ, an enemy within or without, people would have to invent one (as many would argue the neo-conservatives did deliberately with their 'War on Terror'). And in his book *The Faith of the Faithless* (whose concept of 'resacralisation', which draws together ideas from Nietzsche, Žižek, Agamben, as well as Heidegger, will be important in Chapter 7), Simon Critchley argues – following Rousseau – that there is a necessity for a transcendent fiction in politics, since authority requires belief, and belief requires an infinite or absolute Truth.[22] This causes deep problems for a genuinely political – i.e. democratic – organization. What is the 'will of the people'? Is it what they say they want in the moment, after exposure to biased versions of events (not to mention outright lies) in the media, or is it what they would want if only they were apprised of all the facts (Hegel's absolute freedom)?

What all call for in one way or another is a supra-metaphysics with a supra-universal aim that somehow respects the multiplicity of cultures, interests, a hyper-theology that can supplies a framework for encompassing conflicting universals.[23] This is why Taylor believes – quite rightly, I think – that Nietzsche's metaphysical struggle is an on-going project.

'Precision and Soul'

The present reconfiguration of scientific and religious thought ought not to be seen as an 'Endarkenment' at all, but as the opportunity for a second Enlightenment. One of the recurrent themes of this dissertation is hope in the shadow of war. While many have blamed – and indeed continue to blame – the Enlightenment for the horrors of the Second World War, in his history of the Scientific Revolution (one of those big-picture ideas, recently exploded as a 'myth', but which still has plenty of intuitive value), *The Sleepwalkers*, Arthur Koestler mounts an impassioned defence of Enlightenment values. In his introduction, he explains how he longs for a 'new departure' in which 'the divided house of faith and reason' may again by unified as it was originally with the 'mystic and the savant in the Pythagorean Brotherhood'. [24] The philosophy that has come closest to realising Koestler's dream of reconciling faith and reason is Badiou's reconceptualization of ontology as mathematics and his idea of the (mathematical) event, in which an infinitely glimpsed truth determines the progress of mathematics through a 'truth procedure'. Both Koestler's Pythagoras and Badiou's mathematical truth procedure make their appearance in Chapter 3 – which can be considered the hub of the thesis – and then these ideas remain in the background of the following chapters.

The title 'precision and soul' (*Genauigkeit und Seele*), however, is borrowed from Robert Musil's masterwork *The Man without Qualities* (*Der Man ohne Eigenschaften*, written 1921-42, published in parts in 1930, 33 and 42).[25] Musil, who trained as a mechanical engineer, was the artist in the Vienna

[22] Simon Critchley, *The Faith of the Faithless: Experiments in Political Ideology* (London: Verso, 2012).
[23] Badiou, and following him Žižek, refer to this as a 'traversal'.
[24] Arthur Koestler, *The Sleepwalkers: A History of Man's Changing Vision of the Universe* [1959] (London: Penguin, 1988), 10. Koestler studied at the University of Vienna in the 1920s.
[25] The formulation is used in repeatedly in the text: Robert Musil, *The Man without Qualities*, trans. Sophie Wilkins and Burton Pike (Oxford: Picador, 1997).

of the 1910s to 20s most dedicated to the cause of reuniting science and religion. He used the literary laboratory of Zola's *Roman expérimental* not to analyse the dehumanising effects of industrialisation, but as a subjunctive space in which potentially utopic solutions to the rift between reason and faith – or 'precision and soul' – might play out. The novel, set the Vienna of 1913-14, offers particular insight into *Wozzeck* and *Arabella* for a number of reasons. [26] As well as writing self-consciously in the quasi-scientific naturalist tradition, Musil incorporated a Woyzeck-like character who is used to explore the destabilizing consequences that borderline insanity poses to the guilty/not-guilty verdict demanded by the law. Indeed, many of the passages about Moosbrugger – whose brutal knifing of a prostitute allow him to be used by the press as a popular hate figure, just as J.C. Woyzeck was in his day – can be read as an expanded critical commentary on the Büchner fragment.[27] *Arabella* is concerned with re-configuring love, romance, and marriage to take account of the new social realities – particularly the commodification of romance, the sexually and intellectually liberated new woman, and the loss of genuine community. Two of Musil's most important themes are about dealing with the fragmentation of society caused by the increasing specialization into ever narrower fields of expertise; and exploring a number of novel ways in which a male-female relationship might take be negotiated – from no-strings-attached sexual promiscuity, through traditional marriage , to breaking taboos about incest.

In a year off from his job as a mathematician, Ulrich experiments with three different utopian ways of living.

(1) The Utopia of Dionysian Abandon.[28] Musil first explores what it would be like for the expressionists to get their wish of being able to bypass the alienated, reified conscious. In what could easily be a satire of Schoenberg, Ulrich's old friend from his university days, Walter, is a painter, a musician and a writer and spends his youth longing for a time when he may renounce the material world and draw entirely on his own soul for inspiration. When he is finally able to do this, he finds that there is nothing there. He is forced to fill the emptiness with the second-hand emotion of Wagner's operas, which he spends his days playing and singing at the piano. On the other hand, Moosbrugger's sex murder is perfectly in harmony with his inner nature and Ulrich wonders whether 'immoralists' like Luther or Eckhardt wouldn't have found him innocent on deeper reflection.

(2) The Utopia of Essayism. In order to overcome the absence of a unified true self, Ulrich attempts to live Nietzschean perspectivism in practice. In adopting institutional roles, opinions, tastes and, most particularly a specific moral code, you are rendering every parameter of yourself as a fixed coordinate within the range of statistical possibilities. The only way to avoid finitizing yourself is to decide nothing. Instead, Ulrich is able to see an event as a number of atoms caught in a force field which he is then able to reflect on from any number of different perspec-

[26] Musil struggled to make an impact in his lifetime, and while he chased Berg, desperate for a meeting, Berg successfully avoided him. It is likely, therefore, that Berg's choice of Woyzeck would have had some influence on Musil's novel. Musil was also 'probably the most perceptive of all the theatre critics reviewing in Vienna in the early 1920s', publishing influential reviews of Hofmannsthal's earlier comedies, like *Der Unbestliche* (1923): W.E. Yates, *Schnitzler, Hofmannsthal, and the Austrian Theatre* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 201.

[27] Musil's sketches show that the character of Moosbrugger held much greater importance in earlier drafts.

[28] Musil does not explicitly name this first utopia. In German, utopias (2) and (3) are 'Utopie des Essayismus' and 'Utopie des anderen Lebens'. There is evidence in the *Nachlaß* that he also intended a final 'Utopie der induktive Gessinnung'. On this and the Nietzschean influence on all the utopias see: Herbert W. Reichert, 'Nietzschean Influence in Musil's *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften*', *The German Quarterly*, 39(1) (Jan. 1966), 12-28.

tives without exhausting all the possibilities or coming to a conclusion. The strength of this attitude is that it allows the observer to hold several incompatible interpretations of reality in their mind at once without reducing them to a fixed set of coordinates.[29] The resulting 'man without qualities' might not have the full selfhood and agency of the Kantian subject, but he does possess a wraithlike soul, which is perhaps one better than the typical soulless modern man or woman. The problem is that he is paralyzed: accepting all viewpoints as equally valid leads to inaction.

(3) The Utopia of the Other Life.[30] The final utopia sees Ulrich and his sister Agathe form an immoral union that attempts to reconcile platonic and erotic love. Their relationship consists of a series of philosophical discussions about the contradictions that morality and the law produces: following the law to avoid punishment is a duty or selfish and therefore cannot be a moral; there is no pleasure (or sense of freedom) in moral acts, only immoral ones; there are too many irreconcilable fields of knowledge (for example the incommensurate disciplines of medicine and the law) to ever come to a decision about what is right (either from a view-from-nowhere scientific viewpoint, or from a moral viewpoint); action therefore always requires suspension of the law and a leap of faith. [31]

The two parts of this thesis deal with *Wozzeck* and *Arabella* in turn. The first two chapters in each part place the works in their historical context(s). The different geneses of the two operas means that the layout of the historical portion is different in each case. For *Wozzeck*, I first consider Büchner's contribution in its own 1830s milieu, before jumping to Vienna 1913 to catch Berg at the Vienna premiere of the work. Here I am keen to highlight the differences between what Büchner was trying to do and how Berg misunderstood this because, in performance, the two visions (and I theorize this as seeing two performances of the same work simultaneously, the music as a sort of inter-semiotic translation of the play) come up against one another and create something not imagined by either artist. The relationship between Strauss and Hofmannsthal – often comically bickering like an old married couple by the time they were writing *Arabella* – is a direct collaboration. Here there are still wide differences in philosophical orientation – especially regarding religion, which Hofmannsthal was nostalgic for and Strauss was glad to be rid of – but, in contrast to *Wozzeck*, as I shall argue, their distinct visions to coalesce into something that exhibits a remarkably unified vision. Each part then culminates in a pair of critical chapters devoted to reading the respective opera as setting out an experimental utopian vision that attempts to reunite precision and soul in some way. Each of the two chapters in each pair approaches the opera in a different way, with a different set of current critical machinery and tying it to a different group of contemporaneous sources – so that the spirit of Nietzschean perspectivism or scientific experimentation is preserved in the structure of the thesis. Each of the artists had already rejected Musil's first utopia – the world of Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde* or Nietzsche's *Birth of Tragedy*. As a first very rough

[29] Here Musil betrays his debt to Mach:

[30] Literally 'The Utopia of Otherly Living', by which Musil meant both 'living through and with another (or the other)' as well as 'living in an other, i.e. immoral, manner'.

[31] Patrizia C. McBride, 'On the Utility of Art for Politics: Musil's "Armed Truce of Ideas" ', *The German Quarterly*, 73(4) (Autumn, 2000), 366-386; 380-1.

approximation, *Wozzeck* could loosely be thought of as an attempt to solve some of the problems that arise in Musil's second utopia; and *Arabella* those of the third.

Büchner's *Woyzeck* ...

Opera is a collaborative art. For the critic who is interested in opera as a multi-media artwork, this makes *Wozzeck* a tricky customer. This is even the case when the object of enquiry is reduced to the artefact left by the composer Berg, without taking into account the staging, lighting, sets, costumes, singing of any particular production that further complicate interpretation. There are a number of methodological problems that don't occur when looking at a Hofmannsthal and Strauss collaboration like *Arabella*. Strauss might have written mostly superficial things about the libretto, but Hofmannsthal's intentions can be pieced together from his collected writings and, since there was at least something like a shared vision, asking to what extent Strauss's music conforms to those intentions is at least a sensible question.[1] In the case of *Wozzeck*, the play 'Woyzeck' does not even exist, just four fragments found on Büchner's desk after his death.[2] Berg worked with one or two less than satisfactory editions that contained numerous errors – mistakes in transcribing Büchner's handwriting as well as in the scene order. Plenty of philological and critical work has been done since and there are now convincing reconstructions of what Büchner might have intended the play to look like, and a wealth of interpretative literature in which Büchner's aesthetic concerns have been contested.[3] Most of this has all taken place in the years since the opera was first performed. Further, the contemporary concerns that made the

[1] This has been contested, and something I will discuss in Part II.

[2] A facsimile of the original handwritten copy plus transcription can be found in Georg Büchner, *Woyzeck. Faksimileausgabe der handschriften*, ed. Gerhard Schmid (Wiesbaden, 1981). The most up-to-date editions of the play are *Woyzeck*, ed. Henri Poschmann et al (München: Beck, 1991) and *Woyzeck: Studienausgabe*, Burghard Dedner, Thomas Michael Mayer (Stuttgart: P. Reclam, 1999). In the sequel, I will use Georg Büchner, *Werke und Briefe*, ed. Karl Pörnbacher et al (München: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1988, 1997), which contains transcripts of the fragments, a reconstruction of the play, the other works, all extant letters to and from Büchner and the medical reports *Woyzeck* is based on. Page numbers in parentheses after quotations reference this edition. The four fragments are transcribed separately: they are numbered H1-4, a designation used by all editors that I will preserve here.

[3] See David Richards, *Georg Büchner's Woyzeck: A History of its Criticism* (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2001).

play so resonant in 1914, and which moved Berg to set it, were borne of a different world from the one of nearly 80 years earlier in which it was originally written.

There is, therefore, no possibility of attributing to *Wozzeck* anything like the shared authorial intention of a collaboration. Nor does it seem possible to provide a acceptable historical contextualization of the opera since it is an amalgam of elements from different periods. This explains why the discourses on the play *Woyzeck* and the opera *Wozzeck* have remained discrete, with music analysts and critics relying on straightforward readings of the play and mostly taking Berg at his word when he said his intention was to follow Büchner's drama as closely as possible. This is unsatisfactory because it is not just Berg's music that has ensured the opera's place in the standard repertory. Büchner's play operates with a more sophisticated critique of enlightenment rationality than Berg was using and posits a more enduring aesthetic solution. Indeed, the purpose of Part I is to show that, although Berg tried to origami the play into a shape that fitted the concerns of his own immediate time and place, it is the refusal of Büchner's original vision to be neatly folded out of sight that has endowed *Wozzeck* with its lasting relevance.

In order to tease this out, I am proposing to modify the idea of opera as a collaboration and view it instead as a *translation*. This was how Berg saw the process: 'I simply wanted to compose good music […] to translate [Georg Büchner's] poetic language into music'.[4] Operatic music performs what Roman Jakobson called 'intersemiotic translation', defined as the 'interpretation of verbal signs by means of signs of non-verbal sign systems'.[5] The non-verbal sign system in this case is one of musical meaning – with the understanding that musical meaning cannot be read as it can with language.[6] Walter Benjamin thought that the 'essential quality' of art was not 'the imparting of information. Yet any translation which intends to perform a transmitting function cannot transmit anything but information – hence, something inessential. This is the hallmark of bad translations'.[7] Any *good* translation must capture something of this non-informational artistic component. In her recent commentary on Benjamin's essay, Mieke Bal has gone further and argued that '[translation] can no longer be traced as a one-directional passage from source to destination. It mediates in both directions'.[8] A good translation, then, is a two way affair that converses with its source, offers commentary and draws the reader into an enhanced engagement with it. This notion of translation allows the critic to read *Wozzeck* as a dialogue between the original Büchner fragment and the Berg musical translation. It allows complete fidelity to the two historical periods, but because the opera now comprises two separate artworks – an original

[4] Alban Berg 'A Word about *Wozzeck*' (1927), Douglas Jarman, *Alban Berg:* Wozzeck (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 152.
[5] Roman Jakobson, 'On the Linguistic Aspects of Translation', *The Translation Studies Reader* (London: Routledge, 2004), 138-143; 139.
[6] Deryck Cooke's *Understanding Music* or Susan McClary's *Feminine Endings* are good examples of how treating music as a linguistic sign system quickly leads to over-simplification.
[7] Walter Benjamin, 'The Task of the Translator' [1923], *Illuminations* (London: Pimlico, 1999), 70.
[8] Mieke Bal, *Travelling Concepts* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2002), 89.

and a translation – that are performed simultaneously, the meaning of the artwork doesn't solidify, but shifts as the separate discourses about Berg and Büchner develop.

And the conversation between 1830s Büchner and 1920s Berg that each performance of *Wozzeck* represents is one worth eavesdropping on. They shared similar ambivalent feelings towards science and rationality – both struck by a sense of wonder that the universe was shaped by unknown forces, but also aware of the limitations of scientific knowledge in providing answers to the dehumanizing effect of technology. However, developments in physics and mathematics in the intervening years meant that the terms in which scientific and social debates took place was very different. Before this eavesdropping becomes possible – as it will in Chapters 3 and 4 – it will first be necessary to situate the play *Woyzeck* in each of the two time frames. Chapter 2 looks at what the play meant to its first audiences in 1914 and how Berg then went on to adapt it. This first chapter reassess what Büchner was doing in 1837. Music historians have long insisted that *Woyzeck*/*Wozzeck* is about more than just social protest – showing a particular interest in the way it treats questions of time, for example.[9] They have said little, if anything, about how the play proposes a rational form of art religion that offers a radical alternative to Wagner's brand of neo-romanticism.

POET OF THE REVOLUTION

With its lowly protagonist, a private in the army, taking on extra work to scrape together enough money to feed his girlfriend and their child and the subject of harassment and physical abuse by his superiors, the obvious conclusion is that *Woyzeck* is a work of social protest, but most critics view this as only a subsidiary theme. John Reddick claims that '*Woyzeck* was clearly not intended to be a "social drama" – that is to say, a play principally aimed at exposing or documenting the iniquities of the given socio-economic system, as epitomized in the suffering of exemplary victims'.[10] Victor Price agrees that its purview is wider: '*Woyzeck* is not a *pièce-à-thèse* … it is neither slice-of-life naturalism nor larger-than-life expressionism, nor is it an anti-militaristic tract … it is something far more complex than any of these'.[11]

Three years before he began work on *Woyzeck*, Büchner was committed enough to social reform to put his own life in danger through revolutionary activities. The distribution of the pamphlet 'The Hessian Messenger' ('Der Hessische Landbote', 1834), which is often thought of as a precursor of Marx and Engels's *Communist Manifesto* (*Manifest der Kommunistischen Partei*, 1848) would have had him behind bars if the Hessian authorities had discovered his co-authorship.[12] Like Marx he knew that in a revolution blood would have to be spilt, but this would not happen until the masses were ready, and they would not be ready until they realized the extent of their exploitation. Unlike Marx, who addressed

[9] Jarman, Wozzeck, 59ff.
[10] John Reddick, *Georg Büchner: The Shattered Whole* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 303.
[11] Victor Price, *The Plays of George Büchner* (London: Oxford University Press, 1972), xvi.
[12] In *Complete Plays*, 165-79. His co-author was the 'liberal propagandist' Ludwig Weidig.

other intellectuals and called for nothing less than the complete overhaul of the political system, Büchner spoke directly to the people, encouraging them only into making a modest set of demands on their leaders: a curb on the extravagance at the Hessian court, universal suffrage and free press, but with most emphasis on providing essentials like food.[13] As it happened, the people were not ready even for this and most of them handed their copies of the pamphlet straight in to the police.[14] There is, then, every reason to believe that Büchner was at least motivated by the desire for social change in his choice of subject matter.

Between Büchner's demands for specific ameliorative measures and Marx's utopianism we can find the birch that Marxist critics have used to thrash him with. Hans Mayer, writing of his 'lack of historical sense', sums it up nicely:

> Here the penalty is paid for ignorance of Hegel's dialectic – and for the backwardness of social circumstances in Germany. From his vantage point on the rock of atheism Marx could descry a promised land, Büchner only a vast desert of hopeless misery.[15]

However, Büchner's 'fatalism' was not due to an ignorance of the Hegelian progressive view of history, but an outright rejection of it.[16] When Büchner died he had just taken up a post at the University of Zurich where he had hoped to lecture on philosophy, as well as the anatomy he had officially qualified for. The notes he made on Spinoza and Descartes in preparation for this show that, against the prevailing idealist current, he accepted Spinoza's determinism and rejected Kant's idea of the free or moral subject: man was nothing more than an automata, no freer than an animal, and not responsible for his actions.[17] He refused to accept Spinoza's proof that there was a God, maintaining that a God of pure love would not have created so much suffering. Most importantly, he viewed science – along with technology, the engine of progressive change in Marxian thought – as inherently weak and not up to the task of emancipating humanity.

Because these ideas are sourced from unpublished, undelivered lectures, some scholars have chosen to emphasize the apparently pro-idealist stance he takes in the introduction to his anatomy lecture 'On Cranial Nerves' ('Über Schädelnerven', 1836).[18] The lecture reflected the continuing influence of Goethe and Schelling's *Naturphilosophie* on German biology as opposed to what he refers to as the

[13] See Maurice B. Benn, *The Drama of Revolt: A Critical Study of Georg Büchner* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 20-36.
[14] Benn, *Drama of Revolt*, 28. At the time, the Grand Duchy of Hesse was an absolutist police state in which no opinions contrary to those officially sanctioned could be expressed in print.
[15] Hans Mayer, *Georg Büchner und seine Zeit* [1946] (Frankfurt a. M., 1972), 365: 'Hier rächt sich die Unkenntnis von Hegels Dialektik – und die Unreife der gesellschaftlichen Umstände. Vom Fels des Atheismus aus erblickt Marx ein Gelobtes Land, Büchner dagegen nur das Grau in Grau hoffnungslosen Elends'. Translation in Benn, *Drama of Revolt*, 35.
[16] In a letter to his fiancée Minna Jaeglé, March 1834, Büchner describes his sense of historical 'fatalism' after studying the French Revolution: 'Ich fühlte mich wie zernichtet unter dem gräßlichen Fatalismus der Geschichte' (288). Georg Büchner, 'Selected Letters', *Complete Plays, Lenz and Other Writings*, trans. John Reddick (London: Penguin, 1993), 195.
[17] See Benn, *Drama of Revolt*, 53-62. His philosophy notes are on the same paper as the draft of *Woyzeck*.
[18] Büchner, (257-69): 'On Cranial Nerves', *Complete Plays*, 183-186. The 'Trial Lecture' was given on commencement of his career as a *Privatdozent* at Zurich. The premise of Reddick's *The Shattered Whole* is that the underlying unity of nature that Büchner advocates in this lecture is the key to understanding his literary work.

'*teleological* standpoint' dominant in France and England.[19] Whereas the teleological biologist was only interested in the purpose of an organ and thus how it contributed to the survival of the individual and hence of the species; the *philosophical* biologist, among whom he counted himself, was interested in how that organ reveals a 'primordial law, a law of beauty' that governed the 'entire organic world'.[20] For example, the eye did not come into existence for the purpose of seeing, as the teleologists believed, but as the manifestation of a 'single law' so that seeing became its effect, rather than its purpose. There were only two paths open to understanding the ultimate unity of nature, or the 'absolute': 'the intuition of the mystic' and the 'dogmatism of the rationalist'. He did not mention mystic intuition again, but he did go on to make an important point about real science as opposed to dogmatic rationality, or 'a priori philosophy' (Spinoza or Schelling's Spinoza-inspired *Naturphilosophie*): 'a very great distance separates it from green, fresh life' and it is unlikely ever to 'close the gap'. Indeed, science needed to recognize that 'the point of its struggle lies not in the achievement of its goal, but in the struggle itself'.[21] There are here important pre-echoes of *Woyzeck*, which is violently anti-dogmatic and values its protagonist's search for truth and his ability, in the initial stages of the play at least, to treat all knowledge as partial and provisional.

Some have questioned whether the suggestion that nature might be intuited by the mystic was serious, and this is what indeed Woyzeck is doing in those hallucinogenic encounters with nature. Assessing Büchner's attitude to spirituality in *Woyzeck* is further complicated by the following passage from a letter to Karl Gutzkow, a member of *Junges Deutschland* and leading oppositional critic:

> Reform society by means of *ideas* deriving from the *educated* class? Impossible! Our age is purely *material*; if you had ever taken a more directly political approach, you would soon have reached the point where reform would have come to a halt all on its own. You will never bridge the gulf between the educated and uneducated classes of society.
> […]
> And the masses themselves? For them there are only two levers: material poverty and *religious fanaticism*. Any party adept at applying these levers will carry the day. Our age needs weapons and bread – and then a *cross* or some such. I believe that in social matters one must start from an absolute principle of *justice*, seek the development of a new life and spirit in the *people*, and let the decrepit society of today go to the devil.[22]

[19] Büchner, 'Cranial Nerves', 183.
[20] Büchner, 'Cranial Nerves', 184.
[21] Büchner, 'Cranial Nerves', 185.
[22] 'Die Gesellschaft mittelst der *Idee*, von der *gebildeten* Klasse aus reformieren? Unmöglich! Unsere Zeit ist ren *materiell*, wären Sie je direkter politisch zu Werke gegangen, so wären Sie bald auf den Punkt gekommen, wo die Reform von selbst aufgehört hätte. Sie werden nie über den Riß zwischen der gebilderten und ungebildeten Gesellschaft hinauskommen. […] Und die große Klasse selbst? Für die gibt es nur zwei Hebel, materielles Elend und *religiöser Fanatismus*. Jede Partei, welche diese Hebel anzusetzen versteht, wird siegen. Unsre Zeit braucht Eisen und Brod – und dann ein *Kreuz* oder sonst so was. Ich glaube, man muß I sozialen Dingen von einem absoluten *Rechts*grundsatz ausgehen, die Bildung eines neuen geistigen Lebens im
Volk suchen und die abgelebte modern Gesellschaft zum Teufel gehen lassen' (319-20). To Karl Gutzkow 1836, *Complete Plays*, 204.

The point about the materiality of the age is twofold: firstly, rationally argued solutions to inequality are going to gain no purchase with the masses (especially coming from jumped-up members of the middle class); and secondly, keeping the masses in a state of subjection benefits the educated minority and so ideas from the latter are not likely to help the former. Instead of attempting to bring about social change revolutionary intellectuals must appeal to the masses' stomachs with bread and their hearts with some form of religion – 'a new life and spirit in the *people*'. His last two works, *Lenz* and *Woyzeck*, were surely the beginning of a project to bring this new spirit about.[23] A number of critics, Wilfred Buch, Egon Krause, Franz H. Mautner, have suggested that while writing *Woyzeck*, between draft H1 and H4, Büchner turned away from his fatalism and back towards a more Christian worldview.[24] I want to argue that the spirituality and related mythology that Büchner was cultivating in *Woyzeck* did not require a return to the dogmatism of Christianity, but was consistent with his atheism, his scientific-idealism, and his aesthetic anti-idealism.

SCIENCE IN THE DOCK

Adorno thought that under Berg's musical treatment the tragedy became a 'transcendental court of appeal'.[25] But even without the help of any music, the play puts theological (Christian, romantic) and rational (scientific) solutions on trial by asking to what extent the character Woyzeck can be held accountable for his crime. The real Johann Christian Woyzeck was arrested shortly after murdering his partner Johanna Christiane Woost on 2 June 1821 in Leipzig.[26] Despite quickly confessing, his trial dragged on he was eventually sentenced to death and beheaded three years later on 27 August 1824. The reason for the delay, and the reason the case attracted such widespread media and public attention, was that the court had trouble deciding whether Woyzeck was insane or not. If the hallucinations and the voices he had been hearing were the result of madness, he couldn't have been held responsible for the murder.[27] What must have fascinated Büchner about the report of Johann Christian August Clarus, the doctor who was called upon to adjudicate, was that although he fully accepted that Woyzeck's hallucinations were real – even going so far as to postulate their medical cause – he nevertheless concluded that the accused never 'in his life' and particularly when 'perpetrating the murder, [suffered] from a disturbed mind'.[28] It is worth quoting Clarus's reasons at length because they demon-

[23] Benn, *Drama of Revolt*, 186.
[24] Quoted in Benn, *Drama of Revolt*,258-9.
[25] Theodor W. Adorno, 'On the Characteristics of *Wozzeck'*, *Wozzeck: Berg*, ed. Nicholas John (London: John Calder, 1990), 37-40; 37.
[26] Details of the case are in Pörnbacher: includes letters from J.C. Woyzeck and all Büchner's sources including Dr Clarus's original reports (586-682). See also Reddick, Shatte*red Whole*, 324-328 and Benn, *Drama of Revolt*, 218-26.
[27] Büchner also drew on other cases, so the fictional Woyzeck is a composite. Benn, *Drama of Revolt*, 219.
[28] Clarus's report appeared in *Zeitschrift für die Staatsarzneikunde* in 1825, a journal to which Büchner's father subscribed; Benn, *Drama of Revolt*, 218-9. Translation in *Complete Plays*, 325-7.

strate the tortuous logic the scientist had to go through in order to fulfil what is effectively a religious function within the institution of the law.

> I feel compelled to remark … that while on the one hand we may greatly esteem the zeal of sundry writers and medical bodies in discovering excuses for acts committed in the turmoil occasioned in a person's emotions by exceptional events, or under the duress of an instinctual will ensnared by the bonds of nature, yet on the other hand we must take full account of the disarray and detriment that would arise from the incautious application of this doctrine if one were to continue—as one has already begun to do—to impute to every urge to murder or steal, every passion for fighting or fire-raising, and ultimately to every single crime, a specific drive or instinctual compulsion, an imperative logic determining the individual's actions, thereby however destroying the effectiveness of the law and robbing forensic medicine of its well-deserved repute.[29]

It is easy to imagine how reading such a passage for someone committed both to science as the revelation of a 'primordial law', and also to political reform would indeed lead to despair.[30] The romantic critique of science and rationality (extending up to Schoenberg's expressionism and beyond) is based on the assumption that it shuts out emotional, intuitive or spiritual ways of understanding the world, that the technology it spawns is leading to an ever more artificial world divorced from nature. But, as we can infer from his annotations to Spinoza and Decartes, what Büchner would have seen in Dr Clarus's remarks was that the weakness of rationality is that it is always subservient to the human animal's irrational side. Clarus was fully cognizant of the fact that the murder J.C. Woyzeck committed was due to his mental illness, but he declared him of sound mind and effectively condemned him to death anyway because he thought that scientific determinism could be used to exonerate any crime. To Clarus's mind, Woyzeck's case marked the border between civilization and anarchy, reason and unreason, and he was prepared to act irrationally to protect the stability of that border. Reason had showed that the free Kantian subject, the moral basis of the law in nineteenth-century Germany, was a fiction and that the law was arbitrary; but an incompatible type of reason had also showed it was necessary if one wanted to prevent a collapse into disorder.[31] The deadlock was broken by invoking Reason theologically: Dr Clarus was able to step into court and declare, with all the institutional authority conferred by medical science, that Woyzeck was sane enough to be guilty. That is, the law sought legitimation from the very discourse that – as Clarus freely acknowledged – makes a mockery of its pretence to be able

[29] 'ich [fühle] mich gedrungen im Allgemeinen zu bemerken, … daß, wenn auf der einen Seite der Eifer einzelner Schriftsteller und medicinischer Collegien Entschuldigungsgründe für Handlungen aufzufinden, die im Sturme eines von ungewöhnlichen Veranlassungen bewegten Gemüths, oder im Drange eines instinktartigen, von den Banden der Natur umstricken Willens begangen worden, höchst achtungswerth ist, dennoch auf der andern Seit auch die Verwirrung und der Nachtheil berücksichtiget werden muß, der aus der unvorsichtigen Anwendung dieser Lehre entstehen würde, wenn man fortfahren sollte, wie man bereits angefangen hat, [für] einen jedes Verbrechen einen besondern Trieb oder einen instinktartigen Zwang, eine Nothwendigkeit des Handelns, anzunehmen, hierdurch aber die Wirkung der Gesetze zu lähmen und die gerichtliche Medicin um ihr Wirkung der Gesetze zu lähmen und die gerichterliche Medicin um ihr wohlverdientes Ansehen zu bringen.': (This part of the report not in Pörnbacher). German and Translation and in Reddick, *Shattered Whole*, 327.

[30] 'Urgesetz' (260).

[31] For the adoption of the Kantian subject as the basis for juridicial responsibility, see William McGrath, *Dionysian Art and Populist Politics in Austria* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1974), 7.

to dispense absolute Justice. The irony, surely not lost on Büchner, was that Clarus was acting out of his own (and channelling the public's) instinct for vengeance. As Nietzsche was to argue in *On the Genealogy of Morality* (1887), criminal law is about bloodlust, it is a system of extracting vengeance from those who have incurred a debt to society.[32] It is there to satisfy the base biological urge of those who have been harmed to enjoy the pain and suffering of the guilty individual. The same biological/physical determinism that is responsible for the crime is also responsible for retribution.

The problem of guilt is a theme that runs through Büchner's work. One critic sees the tragedy of *Dantons Tod* (1833), for example, as an evolution from its Shakespearean forebear, in which guilt grows out of evil, and must be punished in order that the time might be put back into joint. In Büchner's conception, 'guilt [arises] from situations that are unavoidable', and, because it grows necessarily out of the ordinary state of human affairs, there is no possibility of a return to a 'healthy normality' – 'the tragic convulsion is permanent'.[33] Büchner dealt with guilt again in the Novelle *Lenz* (1835) where, in his proleptic account of schizophrenia, he diagnoses guilt as 'the *result* of madness, rather than its *cause* – turning the traditional schema on its head'.[34] Woyzeck is the anti-tragic hero: after he has been purged, order does not return as it does in Shakespearean tragedy; the chaos is an on-going and ineradicable part of the system. Woyzeck, the flesh and blood human being is tormented by his own culpability: his whole sorry life revolves around his need to take responsibility for his bastard child. When Marie, the mother, cheats on him with the Drum Major, Woyzeck makes her take responsibility for her action by paying for her 'sin so big and so fat' with her life.[35]

It is wrong to say that Clarus was just a reactionary or that the play is simply about giving Woyzeck the fair trial he never received in life. Woyzeck and Marie's transgressions were the result of biological drives and social conditions beyond their control (and in an absolute sense the result of the impersonal Newtonian universe grinding away on its predetermined course). This might make an audience question how to apportion blame in these cases. Is it right that a man who fathers a child supports the woman and the child? Should the woman then be expected to be faithful? Is murder a proportionate punishment? And if it isn't, should that too be punished? Did the child deserve to be born into such a family? None of these questions are answered by the play.

All of these are subordinate to the bigger question it asks about the ability of Enlightenment reason to provide a basis for morality any better than the irrational one it supposedly replaced. The psychotic, sitting uncomfortably on the boundary between the rational world of organized society and insanity, challenges the notion that the irrational is something that is Other to ordinary civilized life. Science is used to hammer the criminal into a familiar shape so that he can be processed and purged

[32] See the (*GM* 2, 10) in particular. There is some deliberately unscientific argument by pun here: The German *Schuld* means both 'guilt' and 'debt'.
[33] Benn, *Drama of Revolt*, 115-6.
[34] Gerhard Irle, *Der psychiatrishe Roman* (Stuttgart, 1965), 78. Quoted in Benn, *Drama of Revolt*, 299.
[35] 'Eine Sünde, so dick und breit' – retained by Berg in the libretto: '*Woyzeck*, edited by Franzos and Landau, 1909' in Nicholas John (ed.), *Wozzeck*, 89.

from the system, neutralizing the threat to the smooth running of the bureaucratic apparatus. But in doing so it becomes theological, acting as a divine sanction to what is decided in the ritual of court proceedings, providing the same reassurances of a divine plan as the teleological Christianity it has replaced. Borderline cases like Woyzeck, by their refusal to fit into either of the arbitrary good/evil theological categories of the judicial system, expose the continuing inability of human beings to escape the clutches of religious thought.

This analysis might put one in mind of Adorno and Horkheimer's *Dialektik der Aufklaïrung* (1947), and one commentator, Richard T. Gray, has indeed suggested that it is operational in *Woyzeck*.[36] Both texts are certainly characterized by pessimism about the emancipatory potential of enlightenment thought, but the contexts were so different that it can be questioned whether it is really legitimate to read one through the other. For example, The Frankfurt School were desperate to understand why enlightened thinking hadn't lead to the socialist revolution that Marx had predicted, but instead to a corrupt (if flourishing) capitalism in the US and totalitarianism in Europe.[37] Büchner, on the other hand, had already rejected any idea of historical necessity. There is, however, still a case to be made that the seeds of Adorno and Horkheimer's dual thesis that 'myth is already enlightenment, and enlightenment reverts to mythology' had already begun to sprout in his writing.[38] There are, however, a number of objections to Gray's argument.[39]

Firstly, he figures enlightenment as already evil. This goes right against the grain of Adorno and Horkheimer's dialectic account, which is not about the victory of 'enlightenment' be it good or bad, but the persistence of myth in enlightenment thought.[40] This is evident in his main thesis that the play is a deconstructive reading of Clarus's report in which 'Woyzeck's hybridization [of reason and unreason] ceases to signify the failure of enlightenment and instead indicates its incipient and insidious victory'.[41] That is, Clarus saw Woyzeck's inability to use reason to control his passions as a failure to be 'enlightened', and then Büchner shows that it is only when Woyzeck becomes enlightened that he is able to commit murder. As he watches the Drum Major groping Marie as they dance in a tavern he chokes, 'Why don't God blow out the sun when he sees the whole world writhing in lechery, men and women, man and beast'.[42] In the next scene, with his ear towards the ground: 'What's that you say?

[36] Max Horkheimer and Theodor W Adorno, *Dialektik der Aufklaïrung. Philosophische Fragmente* [1947] (Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer, 1969). Translated by Edmund Jephcott as *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments*, ed. Gunzelin Schmid Noerr (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002).
[37] Jürgen Habermas, 'The Entwinement of Myth and Enlightenment: Horkheimer and Adorno', *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures*, trans. Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1987), 116.
[38] Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, xviii.
[39] Richard T. Gray, 'The Dialectic of Enlightenment in Büchner's *Woyzeck'*, *The German Quarterly*, 61(1) (Winter, 1988), 78-96.
[40] Simon Jarvis cautions: 'it is easy to arrive at a misreading of the work in which the authors are understood to be saying that enlightenment is a bad thing': *Adorno: A Critical Introduction* (Cambridge: Polity, 1998), 22.
[41] Gray, 'Enlightenment in *Woyzeck'*, 88.
[42] 'Warum löscht Gott die Sonne nicht aus? Alles wälzt sich in Unzucht über einander …' – used by Berg: John (ed.), *Wozzeck*, 92. Trans. in *Complete Plays*, 128.

Louder! Louder! – Stab, stab the bitch dead? […] Does the wind say it too? […]'.[43] Gray is right, punning on his name, that Clarus is anything but clear in his mix of reason and unreason and that the play-Woyzeck comes to his decision to kill Marie through a similar confusion of reason and unreason. But neither Woyzeck's turn to pre-enlightenment Christian God and Nature to justify his actions nor Clarus's evocation of Reason as a pure theological category represent enlightened attitudes. The only reason they seem so is because Gray mistakenly equates enlightenment with any theological mix of reason and unreason in the first place. This doesn't mean, and Büchner's play does not preclude the possibility, that there can be a type of reason that doesn't succumb to this type of absolute interventionism.

Another objection is that Gray ignores the importance of the other side of Adorno and Horkheimer's dialectic: myth is already enlightenment. For Büchner, human beings were incapable of relinquishing myth, and it was by no means desirable to do so anyway. In order to harness the full potential of scientific reason, a non-religious (or non-dogmatic) way had to be found of getting myth (or spirituality) and reason to work together now that the enlightenment had prised them irrevocably apart. The argument of the next section is that, while the themes explored in the play encourage reflection on how this might be done, the aesthetic experience of the play itself offers its own answer – what might be thought of as a neo-Pythagorean fusion of reason and spirituality.[44]

NATURE VS NURTURE

Myth or spirituality and reason are intertwined throughout the play, but for simplicity's sake, each will be considered separately.

Reason

The core of the enlightenment myth is that through reason man is able to dominate nature, including his own human nature. However, Büchner does not tackle this deconstructively, but dialectically. He presents two extremes, which are both equally ridiculous, leaving it up to the auditor to mediate between the two.

The first is that human beings can exercise free will over their animal urges and bodily functions. This is displayed with grotesque exaggeration in the attitudes of both the Captain and Doctor. They are interested, respectively, in the comings and goings of Woyzeck's penis, and, by contrasting their own ability to control theirs with Woyzeck's inability to control his, they draw the boundary between civilization and animal life. The Captain considers Woyzeck to lack 'morality' or 'virtue' because he has

[43] 'Was sagt Ihr? So – lauter! lauter! Jetzt hör' ich's. Stich – stich die Zickwölfin todt […]' – not used by Berg: John (ed.), *Wozzeck*, 95. The Franzos-Landau version used by Berg has 'und die Pappeln sprechen's': i.e. the trees not the wind tell him. Trans. in *Complete Plays*, 129.

[44] For a discussion of the opera (including Berg's use of the passacaglia for the scene in the Doctor's surgery) in relation to Adorno and Horkheimer's *Dialektik der Aufklärung* see Mário Vieira de Carvahlo, '*Wozzeck* und die *Dialektik der Aufklärung*', *Alban Berg's* Wozzeck *und die Zwanziger Jahre: Vorträge und Materialien des Salzburger Symposions 1997*, Peter Csobádi et al (eds), (Anif/Salzburg: Verlag Müller-Speiser, 1999), 153-167

'a child not blessed by the church'. Although the Captain too too is 'flesh and blood', aroused by the glimpses of women's 'white stockings skipping down the street' after the rain, he is able to restrain himself.[45] In his exchanges with the Captain and the Doctor, Woyzeck challenges their views – they complain 'you think too much', 'you're philosophizing again'. In this case he blames his lack of morality on his lack of money, suggesting that morality, like civilization in general, is something that one wears like an item of clothing, merely concealing one's 'flesh and blood' nature, not doing anything to alter its essence.[46] The Doctor, who is using Woyzeck for dietary experiments, needs his urine samples and is upset to have seen him 'pissing in the street'.[47] Again it is Woyzeck's inability to regulate his own biology that marks him out as no better than an animal: when he protests that 'when nature calls' there is no choice, the Doctor insists that 'nature' is nothing but 'superstition' and that 'the *musculus sphincter vesicae* are subject to the human will'.[48] When Woyzeck is then also unable to piss on demand, the Doctor comically demonstrates his own self-control by refusing to get angry, which he views as 'bad for the health' and 'unscientific'.[49] Woyzeck, by contrast, is likened to an animal, a 'newt', who has 'lost all self-control' – and in terms of the experiment the Doctor is running, he is nothing more than a lab rat.[50] The hypocrisy of the Doctor's outburst is revealed when he admits that he had only caught Woyzeck urinating because he had 'just stuck [his] nose out of the window and was letting the sun play on it in order to observe [himself] sneezing'.[51] At the end of the scene, the Doctor's will to knowledge revealed to be no more than a manifestation of his own biological drive toward fame and higher status: 'My theory! Oh, my fame! I shall be immortal! Immortal! Immortal!'[52]

The other extreme, which Woyzeck seems to have some sympathy with when under attack by the Captain and the Doctor, is that all human life is just eating, shitting and fucking, and that civilization – rational thought, science, manners, morality – is just a mask concealing our essential bestiality. This is the attitude of the fairground Showman, who tries to convince his audience that his performing ani-

[45] 'Er hat keine Moral!', 'Er hat keine Tugend'*, 'Er hat ein Kind ohne den Segen der Kirche!', 'wenn's geregnet hat, und den weissen Strümpfen so nachseh', wie sie über die Gasse springen – verdammt! Ich hab' auch Fleisch und Blut!'*: John, *Wozzeck*, 62-3. Quotations with an asterisk are not used in Berg's *Wozzeck*.

[46] 'Man hat auch sein Fleisch und Blut! Ja wenn ich ein Herr wär, und hätt' einen Hut und eine Uhr und ein Augenglas und könnt' vornehm redden, ich wollte schon tugendhaft sein!': John, *Wozzeck*, 63.

[47] 'Er hat wieder gepisst, auf der Strasse gepisst', John, *Wozzeck*, 69. Berg changed 'pissen' to 'husten' throughout the scene to get the opera past the censors. It makes no sense with this substitution and the original 'pissen' and its cognates are almost always used in performance today.

[48] 'Aber Doktor, wenn Einem die Natur kommt!', 'Die Natur kommt! Aberglaube, abscheulicher Aberglaube! […] Hab' ich nicht nachgewiesen, dass der *musculus sphincter vesicae* dem Willen unterworfen ist?': John, *Wozzeckop*, 72. Berg is forced to substitute 'das Zwerchfell' (the diaphragm) for 'der *musculus sphincter vesicae*' (the muscles of the bladder sphincter), to agree with his use of 'husten' (to cough) instead of 'pissen' .

[49] 'ärgern ist ungesund, ist unweissenschaftlich!': John, *Wozzeck*, 73.

[50] 'Wenn es noch ein Molch ware, der einem unpässlich wird': John, *Wozzeck*, 73. Büchner probably chose the newt/salamander because fish and amphibians were his own area of scientific expertise. In the scene in the Professor's courtyard (the Professor is almost certainly the same character as the Doctor), he explicitly calls Woyzeck an 'animal' ('Thier').

[51] 'ich steckte gerade die Nase zum Fenster hinaus und liess die Sonnenstrahlen hineinfallen, um das Niesen zu beobachten, die Entstehung des Niesens'*: John, *Wozzeck*, 72.

[52] 'Meine Theorie! Oh, mein Ruhm! Ich werde unsterblich! Unsterblich! Unsterblich!': John, *Wozzeck*, 75.

mals, having learnt to imitate the accoutrements of civilization, are now 'human beings in animal form'.[53] His sales pitch begins: 'Consider the creature as God first made it: nothing, just nothing. Add civilization and see what you've got: walks upright, wears trousers and carries a sword'. He proves his point in the show by exhibiting a monkey dressed as a soldier who can shoot a pistol, and a horse (or donkey, depending on the edition) that can reason, which it demonstrates by nodding its head in agreement.[54] The scene culminates in the horse, having just been likened to a human being, defecating on the stage. This does not invalidate the Showman's claims at all: 'Go on, put society to shame! There, you see, the beast is still a part of nature, unspoilt nature. You should follow his example. Just ask your doctor, it does terrible 'arm (to keep it in). That's the motto: man, be natural'.[55] There is no difference between the donkey and the human, both are nothing but 'dust, sand, dirt'.[56]

In the first of the fairground scenes Marie is being pursued by the Drum Major, and in the second reciprocates by clambering down to sit next to him in the front row ostensibly to get a better look. Büchner is asking us to consider whether Marie's sexual indiscretions are due to her lack of free will, as the Captain and Doctor think, or whether, like Woyzeck's pissing against the wall or the donkey shitting on stage, she is just 'being natural'. Later, in the scene with Marie and the Drum Major alone, Büchner foregrounds the animalistic nature of the attraction between them, now equating animal with 'man' and 'woman'. She bids him march up and down so she can admire his 'chest like an ox, beard like a lion'; he calls her a 'wild animal', anticipating their bestial coupling: 'Christ almighty, we could breed little drum-majors like bloody rabbits – let's get started, eh?'[57]

The other side of the Drum Major's virile masculinity is seen later on when, drunk, he challenges Woyzeck to a fight, which, given that Woyzeck has eaten nothing but peas for three months, he easily wins. Violent competition for status and domination is thus shown to be at root the entirely natural process of fighting for access to the females of the species, no different to the rutting of stags.[58] Büchner presented two views in the play: that civilized man has dominion over his own nature, and that man is completely controlled by his biology – civilization being just ornamentation appended to the animal essence. Each is mercilessly satirized in its turn because neither can be accepted as an adequate description of human society.

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[53] In the modern critical editions the fairground scenes are iii and iv, which occur before the scene with the Doctor, scene vi. In Berg's Franzos-Landau edition they were placed as scenes v and vi, after the scene with the Doctor, which is scene iv as it is in the opera.

[54] There are two occasions where it seems the donkey/horse ought to nod its head, which were not indicated by Büchner.

[55] Trans. in *Complete Plays*, 117. Not in Berg's edition.

[56] 'Was ist der Unterschied zwischen einem Menschen und einem Esel? Staub, Sand, Dreck sind beide. Nur das Ausdrücken ist verschieden': John, *Wozzeck*, 77. In Berg's edition, but not set.

[57] 'die Brust wie ein Stier und ein Bart wie ein Löwe … Mann!', 'Und Du, bist auch ein Weibsbild! Sapperment! Wir wollen eine Zucht von Tambourmajors anlagen. Was?!': John, *Wozzeck*, 77. Trans. in *Complete Plays*, 121. Set by Berg.

[58] As an anatomist Büchner would have been well aware of the brutality of nature, but it was common currency at the time. Take the following from Schopenhauer's *Der Welt als Wille und Vorstellun*g (1819): 'The individual [of a species] has no value for nature […]. Therefore nature is always ready to let the individual fall, and the individual is accordingly not only exposed to destruction in a thousand ways from the most insignificant accidents, but is even destined for this and is led towards it by nature herself …'. (*WWR* I, 54)

Myth

For the most part, spirituality is not dealt with in such black and white terms, which is perhaps unsurprising given Büchner's belief in the necessity of some form of religion in any new social order. But, although his relationship with enlightenment and scientific thought was complicated, the one thing that is rejected outright in Woyzeck is romanticism.

Gray, who sees *Woyzeck* as an attack on enlightenment rationality, ends up slipping into anti-enlightenment romanticism. He is right that, for Woyzeck, nature holds no 'comfort', that it is 'an enemy against which they must defend [himself]', but he is wrong to attribute this to the modern 'alienation from the life-world' as if there were a time when nature was only 'nourisher'.[59] The play might open up a space for multiple interpretation, but this is just a misreading. Gray makes the mistake of labelling any theological thought, Christianity, Romanticism or Scientism, as 'enlightenment', whereas they are clearly delineated and set in opposition as impossible extremes. The play asks whether rationality can rescue humanity in any way from nature and from its natural biological urges, which are responsible for all the cruelty, the violence and ultimately the whole unequal system depicted in the play. For Büchner, man has not become estranged from nature due to rationalization and technology – rather, nature is has always been a cold, indifferent brute fact: enlightenment doesn't cause this or even make it worse, it just fails to live up to its billing of improving things.

Büchner does not deny that the contemplation of nature can lead to the sort of profoundly religious sensations that Romanticism tried to reproduce artificially – indeed he had such revelatory visions himself.[60] However, the problem, as it was to become also for Nietzsche, was that in the absence of a transcendent mythology, there seemed no way of harnessing the indescribable power of such feeling. Woyzeck's hallucinations take the form of the religious spiritual experience or art-religious aesthetic experience that Romantics like his contemporary E. T. A Hoffmann craved: the abolition of the barrier between inner and outer, between subject and object, and a sense of a mystical oneness with all things.[61] The first few pages of Büchner's earlier Novelle *Lenz* (1835-6), which is based on the real events surrounding Jacob Lenz's descent into insanity, describe just such an episode with far greater intensity and seriousness than anything in Hoffmann.[62] However, in both *Lenz* and *Woyzeck*, although

[59] Gray, 'Enlightenment in *Woyzeck*', 61.

[60] 'Ich verwünsche meine Gesundheit. Ich glühte, das Fieber bedeckte mich mit Küssen und umschlang mich wie der Arm der Geliebten. Die Finsternis wogte über mir, mein Herz schwoll in unendlicher Sehnsucht, es drangen Sterne durch das Dunkel, und Hände und Lippen bückten sich nieder. Und jetzt? Und sonst? Ich habe nicht einmal die Wollust des Schmerzes und des Sehnens': Letter to Minna Jaeglé, around 9-12 March 1834 (288-9).

[61] See E.T.A Hoffmann, *The Golden Pot and Other Stories*, trans. Ritchie Robertson (Oxford & New York: Oxford World's Classics, 1992) for an English translation of Hoffmann's best known *Märchen*, *Der goldne Topf* (1814), which contains a number of ecstatic-painful quasi-religious experiences in communion with nature typical of romanticism. Famously, Hoffmann described how such feeling was generated by the Beethoven Symphony: E. T. A. Hoffmann, ' "Beethoven's Instrumental Music": Translated from E. T. A. Hoffmann's *Kreisleriana* with an Introductory Note', trans. Arthur Ware Locke, *The Musical Quarterly*, 3(1) (Jan., 1917), 123-33.

[62] The psychiatrist Walter Schulte refers to Büchner's Novelle *Lenz*, about the mental decline of Goethe's contemporary and friend, as 'that classic study of schizophrenia', going on to remark how art can often anticipate science by decades: 'jene

the visions might offer the protagonist some temporary comfort or hope, nature or God, turn out to be at best indifferent at worst hostile to his plight. Lenz is so confident in the power of God that he believes he can bring a dead child back to life but, when he kneels before it and prays fervently, nothing happens, leading to a violent renunciation of his faith. Although Woyzeck seems to be tortured by his hallucinations, their mix of Romantic and Christian imagery does offer him the hope that there is a reason for his wretched existence, if only he could uncover it. For both Lenz and Woyzeck, whether there is any deep metaphysical truth contained in them or not, their moments of delirium mark their gradual loss of contact with reality.

So much for Romanticism. But what about religion – hadn't the enlightenment made it redundant? Here Büchner uses a different strategy: instead presenting grotesque extremes he shows more realistic situations in which superstitious belief is shown to be not so much baneful as frustratingly inadequate. Whatever case there might be for considering the play a precursor of Zola or Hauptmann's naturalist plays of the 1880s and 90s, the apparently realistic stage-world of *Woyzeck* is suffused with supernaturalism. This has nothing to with Woyzeck's hallucinations, which can easily be seen as just that, but through the content of the hallucinations, the folk songs and folk tales that run throughout, which pre-echo important aspects of what is to come: infidelity, death, children growing up without parents, and so on.

Marie in particular has an ambivalent relationship with superstition and Christianity. In the first instance, she is seen trying to scare the infant to sleep by conjuring up the image of the sandman on the wall with a piece of broken mirror: 'Shut your eyes up tight! If he looks into your eyes, you'll be blinded, child'.[63] She is admiring the earrings the Drum Major has given her (after their sexual encounter in the Franzos-Landau version used by Berg, in anticipation of it in most modern critical editions), but Woyzeck is just about to turn up with the money he has earned, and so Marie is racked with guilt and torturing the child as a result. In the second instance, she is leafing through the bible looking for some form of comfort, which she finds in the story of an adulterer who is forgiven by Jesus.[64] But though she can admit her sin and feel contrition, she knows her own sexual needs and simply cannot promise to 'sin no more'.[65] As Nietzsche was to agree later in the century, Christianity may offer some comfort, but the price is guilt, as the individual is made to feel that his own natural biological drives are his own fault.

The abiding image of Woyzeck is of someone on a spiritual quest to discover the truth, but this too turns out to be a double-edged sword. His hallucinations seem to have meaning and he even sees meaningful patterns in the circles of toadstools, 'if only one could read them!', but, like the donkey, he is

klassisch gewordene Schizophreniestudie' in Irle ed., *Der psychiatrishe Roman*, (Stuttgart: 1965), 8. Translation in Benn, *Drama of Revolt*, 200.

[63] 'Mach die Augen zu! Oder es sieht Dir hinein, dass Du blind wirst …': John, *Wozzeck*, 81.

[64] John 8:3 and 8:11.

[65] 'und sündige hinfort nicht mehr': John, *Wozzeck*, 100.

unable to express himself and is forced to rely on half remembered quotations from the bible.[66] In the beginning of the play this marks him out as distinct from the Doctor and the Captain, who have swallowed the ideology of their age wholesale and are incapable of thought, only the reproduction of platitudes and stock opinions. Woyzeck is still an actual person, with a soul if you like, because he refuses to tie himself down to any dogmatic system of values, like the scientist, the good man (that the Captain believes himself to be), the Christian. This being tragedy, when he gets his wish it does not give the sort of answers he was hoping for. In the hallucination he experiences at the opening of the play he speaks of a head rolling in the evenings, which is a presentiment of his own head rolling as surely it would have done at the end Büchner had completed the play. The biblical quotations are from the story of Sodom and Gomorrah and its destruction, foreshadowing the sexual antics of his wife and the Drum Major and her death at his hands.

The seeds of Nietzsche's critique of modernity – particularly the failure of Socratic thought – are already evident here. Man's continual struggle for betterment, be it scientific advancement, philosophical truth or spiritual enlightenment leads only to disappointment and greater despair. In a scene that occurs between Marie's abortive confession and her murder, a poetic rendering of Woyzeck's personal search for enlightenment, which also works as a metaphor for religion and science in general, is told by an Old Woman to some children playing in front of Marie's house. She tells of a boy who has no mother and no father, is lonely and hungry and cried day and night. 'And since there was no one left on earth, he decided to go to heaven. And the moon looked down on him like a friend, but when he finally got to the moon, it was a lump of rotten wood'.[67] The sun and stars yield similar disappointments, so he returns to earth, which he now finds is just an 'upturned pot'.[68] 'And so the boy was all alone, and he sat down and cried: "I've no father or mother, no sun, moon or stars, and no earth". And he's still sitting there all alone'.[69]

BETWEEN SCIENCE AND MYTH

For a social radical for whom the enlightenment and the French Revolution initially seemed to hold such promise, Büchner's mature – not to mention historically precocious – realization that empirical reality did nothing to support such optimism was a bitter blow.[70] Nevertheless, it is wrong to think that his art, and particularly *Woyzeck*, is the expression of anti-enlightenment resentment and ultimate resigna-

[66] 'Wer das lessen könnte': John, *Wozzeck*, 74. 'Ich hab's heraus! Es war ein Gebild am Himmel, und Alles in Glut! Ich bin Vielem auf der Spur!', 'Steht nicht geschrieben: 'Und sieh, es ging der Rauch auf vom Land, wie ein Rauch vom Ofen.': John, *Wozzeck*, 68. This is taken almost ad verbatim from Genesis 19:28, where the aftermath of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah is described. He makes two earlier references to the same story.

[67] 'Und weil es niemand mehr hatt auf der Welt, wollt's in den Himmel geh'n. Und der Mond guckt' es so feundlich an, und wie's endlich zum Mond kommt, ist's ein Stück faul Holz'.

[68] 'ein umgestürzt Häfchen'.

[69] 'Und so war das Kind ganz allein und hat sich hingesetzt und hat geweint: Hab' nicht Vater noch Mutter, hab' nicht Sonne, Mond und Sterne und nicht die Erde. Und da sitzt es noch und ist ganz allein.': John, *Wozzeck*, 103.

[70] See also Benn, Drama of Revolt, 5-14 for details of Büchner's youthful support for the French Revolution and his later rejection of the heroic doctrine that humanity could reshape the world purposively.

tion.[71] Nor can it be considered to be a protest against either rationality or spirituality. Indeed, it was enlightenment rationality that had exposed the truth that however successful reason and science were, myth and mysticism were always going to be an integral part of human thought, they were always going to be used to legitimate hierarchical power structures, but, on the other hand, they are always going to provide solace for those dominated. Rather, he was protesting about the Kantian settlement, which pinned the blame for inequality on the poor themselves, by assuming that, as free individuals, they were entirely responsible for their own situation.

One long-standing criticism of Kant is that he appropriated the success of science in explaining how the universe works in order to confer theological status on Reason. He then pretended to derive morality from reason, while ignoring the empirical reality of real human behaviour when it was empirical observation that allowed for the deification of Reason in the first place.[72] In this, Büchner's work can be seen to follow a similar path to Schopenhauer's *On Morality*, where, in direct opposition to Kant, he attempted to derive a psychological explanation of morality from the way people act in the world rather from some predetermined set of (Christian) dictates. (Again, this prefigures Nietzsche, who held onto Schopenhauer's psychologism and empiricism long after he ditched his metaphysics.[73]) Even though *Woyzeck* does not come to firm conclusions about how one ought to act, it does force the auditor to face up to empirical reality. Any ethical system ought to be based on the evidence of real sexual relationships instead of the didactic templates offered by Romanticism – even if it turns out that love, like the friendly-looking moon, is only a pile of rotting wood when examined close to.[74] It does this by aestheticizing the objective scientific gaze. The play is set up so that it turns the auditor into a scientific observer of the stage action rather than a passive spectator.

Firstly, the characters themselves are always looking, watching and observing. This is most obvious in the case of the Doctor whose attitude that 'one must observe everything' percolates down into every layer of the play.[75] As well as his observations of Woyzeck in the scene in his surgery, we also see him leaning out of a window in his roof 'like David when he saw Bathsheba', where he is about the throw a cat from the roof in order to investigate the relation between 'subject and object' or between 'one of those things in which the divine organically affirms itself by becoming so splendidly manifest' and 'space', 'time' and 'the universe'.[76] The cat only manages to escape because the Doctor suddenly

[71] Gray argues, for example that the play, like *The Dialectic of Enlightenment*, is characterized by 'resignation' and 'rebellion': resignation that nothing can be done and yet the need to rebel impotently against the status quo. Gray, 'Enlightenment in *Wozzeck*', 78.

[72] Kant's mystifying prose is one way in which he hoodwinks the reader into believing the categorical imperative has come about through reason when he assumes the very thing he is trying to prove. See the section 'The Derivation of the Categorical Imperative' in Paul Guyer, *Kant* (London: Routledge, 2006), 179-91.

[73] For example, one of the reasons he gives for preferring *Carmen* over Wagner is that stabbing one's former lover out of jealousy is so much more characteristic of real love than the selfless love of Wagnerian opera. (*CW*, 2)

[74] See the letter to his parents February 1836 (285-6).

[75] 'Man muss alles beobachten': John, *Wozzeck*, 72. Not used by Berg.

[76] 'Ich bin auf dem Dache wie David, als er die Bathseba sah ...'. 'Wir sind an der wichtigen Frage über das Verhältniss des Subjekts zum Objekt. Wenn wir eins von den Dingen nehmen, worin sich die organische Selbst-Affirmation des Göttlichen

spots a new species of louse in its fur and takes out a magnifying glass to better observe it. The auditor is then called to witness the Doctor's callous blindness to Woyzeck's suffering as a fellow human being. When the cat, who has 'no instinct for science', runs off, he offers up Woyzeck to his students for observation instead: they jab away, examining his temples, pulse and chest, ignoring the distress his shakes and dizziness are causing.[77]

Woyzeck and Marie are obsessed with looking and watching too. Marie's neighbour taunts her when she is watching the soldiers, 'Ooh, neighbour, what a friendly sparkle in your eye – that's a novelty, coming from you! […] I'm a decent woman, I am, but you, you see clean through seven pairs of leather breeches!'[78] Woyzeck must look at the Captain as he shaves him, he observes strange patterns in nature, and he watches in disgust as Marie dances with the Drum Major. In the murder scene, he searches in vain for any evidence of Marie's sin written on her face, he notices her red lips and later the red ribbon around her neck. Both are spectators at the fair, watching the animals as the audience watches them.

Secondly, Büchner uses various techniques that lead the audience to believe what they are witnessing is a chunk of genuine reality. He eschews poetic language, preferring the vernacular with its coarse expressions. The fragments themselves are thin slices of actual time: there is no time dilation, no conflation of events or activities, and no expository or developmental narration of events that have taken place off stage. Traditional dramatic form is so thoroughly rejected that the modern editor finds it impossible to determine in what order the fragments should come; instead, the play shuffles together a variety of genres to create the illusion that the play is not theatrical. [79] It is, of course, highly theatical: the narrative is calculated to heighten the emotional response while preserving the semblance of reality. Most of the scenes portray everyday repetitive or static occurrences, but at the same time events accumulate tension in a dynamic structure that finally explodes in the violent climax. There is an emphasis on descriptive staging that creates an impression of actually being there – the stench of stale alcohol, sweat and excreta is always in the air. The subject matter is of a sort that stimulates the curiosity of scientists – the pathological and the deviant – and the portrayal of the characters in physiological terms, emphasizing their appetites for sex, food and violence, Or even worse, the Doctor's attitude often indicates that he views the body as nothing more than a physical mechanism – no more than 'dust, sand, dirt'. The play is not experimental in the sense of Zola's 'La roman expérimental' (1880), but it does dramatize the physiological and psychological results of the dietary experiment carried out by the Doctor, which, encourage the auditor to feel as if they are observing an animal experiment. The

auf einem so hohen Standpunkte manifestirt, und ihr Verhältniss zum Raum, zur Erde, zur Zeit untersuchen, …': John, *Wozzeck*, 79. This scene occurs on manuscript H3, which only contains two scenes, so there is no way of telling where it was meant to come. Editors have put it near the start, middle and end of the play. Trans., *Complete Plays*, 126.

[77] 'Das Thier hat keinen wissenschaftlichen Instinkt': John, *Wozzeck*, 80.

[78] 'Ihre Augen glänzen ja [noch]! […] *Ich* bin eine honette Person, aber, Sie, das weiss Jeder, Sie guckt sieben Paar lederne Hosen durch!': John, *Wozzeck,* 67.

[79] On the problems that faced editors of the work down the years see John Reddick's notes in Georg Büchner, *Complete Plays,* Lenz *and Other Writings* (London: Penguin, 1993), 247-250.

sense of realism is also a result of Büchner's meticulous research. In addition to Clarus's report, Büchner used a number of other medical reports of similar cases, so that the fictional world is a composite of bits of reality.[80] The resulting wealth of accurate, referential detail and the believability of the events gives the work the unmistakable mien of authenticity.

By incorporating a poetized empirical observation into the structure of the play Büchner was able to demonstrate the strength of the scientific method and hence of enlightenment thinking in general: its ability for constant self-critique and renewal. Primacy is always given to empirical data so, however entrenched particular lines of reasoning or theories become, painstaking observation of the real world can always overturn them.[81] And since any seemingly firm conclusion is open to criticism and revision, dogmatic modes of thought are always liable to have their bases overturned: whether it was Christianity or the new quasi-religions of Scientism or Romanticism. Further, the fragmentary nature of the play induces in the auditor the constant state of bewilderment of the true scientist: as Büchner observed in his lecture, there is an unbridgeable gap between the transcendent truth, which science must necessarily posit, and knowledge, which must rely on imperfectly gathered and incomplete data. Woyzeck's initial confusion and desire to understand is, therefore, much more representative of the genuine scientist than the Doctor who feigns complete understanding and sees science as a means to an end.

In *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche called the sort of attitude displayed by Woyzeck 'intellectual conscience', claiming it was what separated the higher human being from the lower. Those with 'bad intellectual conscience', those who could 'stand in the midst of this *rerum concordia discors* ('the discordant harmony of things': Horace, Epistles I.12.19) and the whole marvellous uncertainty and ambiguity of existence *without questioning*, without trembling with the craving and rapture of questioning' he found 'contemptible'.[82] Dr Clarus's report was not an 'incipient and insidious victory' of the enlightenment project as a whole, as Gray argued, but only of one pernicious side of it. *Woyzeck* is certainly an anti-*bad*-enlightenment polemic, but it also tries to lay down the mythology of *good* enlightenment: that of unending critique (including self-critique), unending quest after truth, and an openness to having one's most deeply-held convictions overturned by empirical evidence.

This rationally conceived mythology, essential as it was for meaningful and continuing social progress, still emanated from the educated sphere of science. In order to help bring about the new 'spirit of the people', Büchner needed a form of spiritual feeling that, in order not to contradict his enlightenment mythology, did not involve any transcendental absolute – like God, Nature, Reason, the

[80] See Benn, Drama of Revolt, 218-26 for detail on the sources of the play.
[81] Indeed the enlightenment only came about because scientists from Galileo to Newton used empirical observation to overthrow the long-standing Aristotelian view of the universe, which is based on common sense reasoning (the earth must be still otherwise we would feel it moving; heavy objects must fall faster than light ones, planets must move in circular orbits, etc.). Arthur Koestler, *The Sleepwalkers: A History of Man's Changing Vision of the Universe* [1959] (London: Penguin, 1964), passim.
[82] (*GS* I, 2) Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, trans Josefine Nauckhoff (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 30.

Subject, Science – that would inevitably be used for domination. The piercing scientific gaze of *Woyzeck* not only asks metaphysical questions and exposes injustice, it also allows the viewer to feel in sympathy with its protagonists. This is because it is an unflinching portrait of Woyzeck and Marie's lived existence; their stage presences are not models for emulation but mirror real life. In *Lenz*, which he was working on at the time he wrote the 'spirit in the people' letter, he puts into the mouth of his literary hero what is surely a statement of his own artistic creed.[83]

> Those writers … of whom it was said that they reflected reality in fact knew nothing whatever about it, but even they were a good deal more bearable than those who sought to *transfigure* reality. The dear Lord … has surely made the world as it is meant to be and I doubt if we can cobble up anything better, our one aspiration should be to create much as he did. What I demand in all things is – life, full scope for existence, nothing else really matters; we then have no need to ask whether something is ugly or beautiful, both are overridden by the conviction that 'Everything created possesses life', which is the sole criterion that matters in art.
> […]
> This 'idealism' displays the most shameful contempt for human nature. People … should enter completely into the life of the meanest of men and then reproduce it with every twitch of an eyebrow, every wink and nod, the whole subtle, hardly perceptible play of facial expressions … .
> […]
> You need to love mankind to be able to reach the essential being of each individual, you must consider no one too lowly, no one too ugly, only then can you understand them; the most ordinary of faces makes a deeper impression than any contrived sensation of beauty, and you can let the characters' own being emerge quite naturally without bringing in anything copied from outside where no life, no pulse, no muscles surge and throb.[84]

Woyzeck was Büchner's attempt to realize this aspiration, to continue what Lenz himself had begun in plays like *Die Soldaten* (1776).[85] Spiritual solidarity could only be found in what is truly universal: life itself. Apart from the need to inspire such feeling among the masses, there was an important reason here why the protagonists of literature should be 'ordinary' or 'lowly', which is that the educated minority, not to mention the power-wielding aristocracy, were too far removed from their 'essential being'. For them, it was cloaked in civilization, in manners, in fixed modes of thought: their actions and ideas were already 'copied from outside'. Büchner turned Spinoza's serene contemplation of the harmony of the

[83] There are letters referring to his work on the Novella written between March 1835 and February 1836. Reddick, 'Notes to *Lenz*', *Complete Plays*, 265.

[84] 'Die Dichter … sie geben die Wirklichkeit, hätten auch keine Ahnung davon, doch seien sie immer noch erträglicher, als die, welche die Wirklichkeit verklären wollten. … Der liebe Gott hat die Welt wohl gemacht wie sie sein soll, und wir können wohl nicht was Besseres klecksen, unser einziges Bestreben soll sein, ihm ein wenig nachzuschaffen sei, Leben habe, stehe über diesen Beiden, und sei das einzige Kriterium in Kunstsachen'. 'Diese Idealismus ist die schmählichste Verachtung der menschlichen Natur. Man versuche es einmal und senke sich in das Leben des Geringsten und gebe es wieder, in den Zuckengen, den Andeutungen, dem ganzen feinen, kaum bemerkten Mienenspiel …'. 'Man muß die Menschheit lieben, um in das eigentümliche Wesen jedes einzudringen, es darf einem keiner zu gering, keiner zu häßlich sein, erst dann kann man sie verstehen; das undedeutendste Gesicht macht einen tiefern Eindruck als die bloße Empfindung des Schönen, und man kann die Gestalten aus sich heraustreten lassen, ohne etwas vom Äußern hinein zu kopieren, wo einem kein Leben, keine Muskeln, kein Puls entgegen schwillt und pocht' (144-5). Büchner, *Lenz*, Complete Plays, 148-50.

[85] For the similarities of *Woyzeck* and *Lenz* see Benn, *Drama of Revolt*, 194-216, passim. Manfred Gurlitt, who wrote the other *Wozzeck* (1926), also wrote the other *Die Soldaten* (1930), now eclipsed by Zimmermann's better-known 1965 version.

heavens – equivalent to God or Nature, in Spinozan metaphysics – on its head. instead, the mystery and the wonder is to be found in contemplation of human nature in all its manifest disharmony. This has direct moral and hence political consequences: the auditor, by seeing what is essential about humanity in the most reprehensible of criminals, has made an important step towards 'loving mankind'. There is an echo here of Schopenhauer's morality, in which the only truly moral act is one based on *Mitleid*.[86] *Mitleid* can be translated as 'pity', feeling sorry for someone (or an animal) that is beneath oneself, but Schopenhauer's meaning was closer to 'compassion'.[87] In feeling *Mitleid*, one sees the other not as a non-ego but as an 'I once more' (or *tat tvam asi*, in the original Sanskrit phrase borrowed from the *Upanishads*). Schopenhauer incorporated this into his metaphysics by saying that one has an intuitive understanding that the other and the self are the same in the thing-in-itself (or the Will) – the difference only exists in the empirical world. In *Woyzeck*, Büchner showed that such universal empathy was actually possible through empirical observation without any need for mystical intuition.

[86] Schopenhauer, *Über die Grundlage der Moral* (1840): *On the Basis of Morality*, trans. Berghahn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).
[87] Nietzsche attacked Schopenhauer's idea of *Mitleid* as the basis of morality, and Nietzsche's translators usually indicate his contempt by translating it as 'pity'.

... becomes Berg's *Wozzeck*

'What do you say? Isn't it fantastic, incredible? Someone must set it to music'.[1] Shortly following this enthusiastic reaction the Vienna premiere of *Woyzeck* on 5 May 1914 at the *Residenzbuhne* on *Rotenturmstrasse*, Berg decided that that someone should be him. Patricia Hall has found convincing evidence that he did not begin serious work on it until after the war in 1918 (or spring 1917 at the earliest).[2] The opera *Wozzeck*, preserving the misreading of the early editor Karl Emil Franzos, was completed in 1922 and, after a one-man publicity campaign, finally staged on 14 December 1925.[3] Berg's experiences in the army in the intervening years left their mark on the score. Firstly in a superficial sense: the famous example is the snoring in the barracks at the start of the fifth scene of the second act which was taken directly from experience. And when he said in a letter to Helene, 'There is something of me in this Wozzeck', he was surely referring to his loss of autonomy and enforced subservience to his superiors.[4] (Jarman also suggests that Berg might have further identified with his protagonist because both had fathered illegitimate children.[5])

It may also have affected the work in more subtle ways. Many Germans and Austrians were forced to reassess their political beliefs between 1914 and 1922. Thomas Mann, for example, spent the

[1] Recollection of Paul Elbogen, related in: 'Firsthand reminiscence of a historic night', *San Francisco Chronicle*, (27 October 1981), 40. Quoted in Jarman, *Alban Berg:* Wozzeck, (Cambridge: Cambridge UP), 1. In the 1929 lecture Berg himself says that he decided to 'compose the opera' 'fifteen years ago': 'A lecture on *Wozzeck'*, in Jarman, Wozzeck, 154.
[2] She suggests that when he began work he was still 'stylistically in the world of the *Marsch'* from the 3 Orchestral Pieces Op. 6 because the war had suppressed his creative drive (not because it was begun before the war): Patricia Hall, 'Berg's Sketches and the Inception of *Wozzeck*: 1914-18', *The Musical Times*, 146(1892) (Autumn, 2005), 5-24, 5-6.
[3] The opera has preserved the early editor Franzos's misreading of the title character's name. The sound of the word 'Wozzeck' is so important in the opera that it cannot possibly be corrected.
[4] Bernard Grun (ed.), *Alban Berg: Letters to his Wife* (London: Faber and Faber, 1971), 229.
[5] Douglas Jarman, 'Alban Berg, Wilhelm Fliess and the Secret Programme of the Violin Concerto', *The Musical Times*, 124(1682) (April, 1983), 218-223.

war writing the anti-democratic polemic *Reflections of an Unpolitical Man* (*Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen*, 1918), but then came around to the democratic viewpoint following the war, giving a speech in October 1922 that ended with the words, 'Long live the Republic!'[6] Berg was a devoted follower of Karl Kraus, read *Die Fackel* religiously, and adopted many of Kraus's views as his own.[7] So Kraus's journey from conservative to social democrat, traced out in the shift of political perspective in *Die letzten Tagen der Menschheit* (1915-22), would have left its mark on Berg's thinking during the gestation of the opera. In 1914 theatrical expressionism was still at the cutting edge but, by 1925, it had become absorbed by the mainstream.[8] This meant that the Berlin premiere was a success and – so the well-known story goes – Adorno had to spend the whole day comforting Berg who, perhaps a little unconvincingly, was trying Schoenberg's disdain for public approval on for size.[9]

Given the further difficulty in piecing together Büchner's own original intentions and the fact that many strands of modernism – naturalism, expressionism, Brecht's social realism – had tried to appropriate Büchner's legacy for their own mutually antagonistic ends, there was never any possibility that Berg could set the play in a neutral way. And yet, this is what he seems to have been suggesting with his wish 'simply' to 'develop musically the contents of Georg Büchner's immortal drama' or that his

> only intention, as related to the technique of composition, was to give the theatre what belongs to the theatre. The music was to be so formed that at each moment it would fulfil its duty of serving the action. Even more, the music should be prepared to furnish whatever the action needed for transformation into reality on the stage. The function of a composer is to solve the problems of an ideal stage director.[10]

Music analysts and critics have tended to take Berg at his word and assume that the Büchner play is a timeless work of art. Critical assessments of the opera have thus tended to fall into a limited number of tropes with differences only in emphasis: it is a work of resignation/nihilism in which Berg demonstrates his pity for the suffering of his protagonist; and it either redeems the actual J.C. Woyzeck's suffering through art or it offers an unearned catharsis.[11] This has left them free to set about uncovering how the music articulates *the* drama as if its meaning were crystalized and immutable. But surely the play meant something different to that 1914 audience in Vienna than it had done to Büchner when he

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[6] Walter D. Morris, 'Translator's Introduction' in Thomas Mann, *Reflections of a Nonpolitical Man* (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1983), xi.

[7] Berg's respect for Kraus is evident in his letters to his wife: *Alban Berg, Letters to His Wife*, ed. and trans. Bernard Grun (London: Faber & Faber, 1971), passim. Adorno talks of how Berg's sense of duty to Kraus's opinions influenced his artistic decisions, refusing to set Hofmannsthal's *Der Turm* as an opera because of his loyalty to *Die Fackel*. Theodor Adorno, *Alban Berg, Master of the Smallest Link* [1968], trans. Juliane Brand and Christopher Hailey (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 27.

[8] 'All that was novel about expressionism in [the early Weimar years] was the extent of its acceptance and its success': John Willett, *Art and Politics in the Weimar Period: The New Sobriety 1917-1933* (New York: Da Capo, 1996), 10.

[9] Theodor Adorno, *Alban Berg: der Meister des kleinsten Übergangs* (Vienna: Elisabeth Lafite, 1968), 18.

[10] Alban Berg, 'A word about *Wozzeck'* in Jarman, Wozzeck, 152.

[11] Adorno, having written the essay for the 1925 premiere, is the source of these ideas. In *Meister des kleinsten Übergangs* he says the gestus of the music in Wozzeck has an 'attitude of "let it be" ' – i.e. one of resignation. He later goes on to describe the opera as expressing 'boundless pity' for its subject. Adorno, *Berg*, 17, 88.

worked on it 77 years earlier in Strasbourg and Zurich. And it is also likely that in adapting the work Berg brought his own set of prejudices to bear. It is clear, then, that Berg's claim that he has preserved an 'immortal drama' is something that needs interrogating.

WOYZECK IN VIENNA 1914

Karl Franzos published the first edition of Woyzeck in 1879. Why did it take until 1913/14 to be staged in Austria and Germany?[12] And when it was, how come was it was considered so relevant to the concerns of the time that two composers decided immediately to set it to music? These are not easy questions to answer, and I can only offer some cautious speculation in three of the areas that will be of most relevance to the discussion in the following two chapters.

Kraus

The influence of Karl Kraus – through his 'anti-paper' *Die Fackel* and his one-man theatrical performances – on all aspects of Viennese culture in the first three decades of the twentieth century has been well documented.[13] Christopher Hailey has observed that, for his both his operas, Berg 'was careful to select texts by authors fully sanctioned by those he looked to for guidance in matters of taste'.[14] By which he means the '*Innenstadt* circles' lead by Altenberg, Kraus, Loos, with whom Berg had already aligned himself before he joined Schoenberg in 1904.[15] Kraus was crucial in the development of Schoenberg's own aesthetic: 'In the dedication of a copy of my *Harmonielehre* which I sent to Karl Kraus, I said, "I have perhaps learned more from you than one is permitted to learn if one wishes to remain independent" '.[16] However, Berg and Schoenberg each absorbed Kraus's beliefs into their respective philosophy of art in different ways, particularly in their conceptions of how music partakes of the *Idea* . There are many reasons why *Woyzeck* would have received the necessary sanction from Kraus.[17]

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[12] The premiere was at the Residenz Theatre in Munich on 8 November 1913.

[13] The latest and most extensive study is Edward Timms, *Karl Kraus, Apocalyptic Satirist,* 2 vols (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1986-2005).

[14] Christopher Hailey, 'Berg's Worlds', in *Alban Berg and His World*, ed. Christopher Hailey (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2010), 25.

[15] Leon Botstein, 'Alban Berg and the Memory of Modernism' in *Berg and His World*, 305. See also Andrew Barker, 'Battles of the Mind: Berg and the Cultural Politics of "Vienna 1900" ' in Cambridge Companion to Berg, ed. Anthony Pople (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1997), 24-37 on Berg's relationship to Altenberg, Loos, Kraus and others. For the specific influence of Kraus's thought on *Wozzeck*, see David P. Schroeder, 'Opera, Apocalypse and the Dance of Death: Berg's Indebtedness to Kraus', *Mosaic: A Journal for the Interdisciplinary Study of Literature* 25(1) (1992), 91-105.

[16] Schoenberg's response to a questionnaire 'Rundfrage über Karl Kraus', quoted in Werner Kraft, *Karl Kraus: Beträge zum Verständnis seines Werkes* (Salzburg: Müller, 1956), 195. Translation in Alexander Goehr, 'Schoenberg and Karl Kraus: The Idea behind the Music', *Music Analysis*, 4(1/2), Special Issue: King's College London Music Analysis Conference 1984 (Mar. - Jul., 1985), 59-71; 64.

[17] I have not come across any direct reference by Kraus to *Woyzeck*, but my speculation here is in line with that of other commentators: 'The nineteenth-century work that anticipates more than any other the frank and honest view of man and nature demanded by Karl Kraus and those who shared his opinions is Georg Büchner's *Woyzeck'*: Dieter Rollfinke and

Despite being hailed as a precursor of German naturalism, there is plenty about *Woyzeck* that is not realistic – the emblematic nature of the characters, the premonitory songs, stories and visions.[18] But artists and cultural commentators of Kraus's generation agreed that the piece said something ineluctably true about the social reality of its time and perhaps even something universal.[19] This was partly due to Büchner's painstaking research and the faithful reproduction of his (and others') observations. However its sense of subjective truth is owed to Büchner's ability to find the most effective way of conveying honestly his feelings about what he had discovered and observed. Kraus valued precisely this type of art, in which the truth about the social totality was allowed by the artist to emerge organically from their own personality.[20]

One of the most enduring catch-all theories of modernism is expressed in the formulation 'the free-play of signifiers', which means, in the terminology of Saussure's *Course in General Linguistics* (1916), that the signifiers in an artwork do not represent a determinate concept, a signified, but merely point beyond themselves to other signifiers in an 'indefinite referral of signifier to signified'.[21] The connection between signifier and concept was weakened or severed altogether so that the modernist artwork became an aesthetically arranged collection of signifying elements (words, figurative/abstract images, notes/chords) in which the relation to concept was irrelevant, only the autonomous arrangement of signifiers was important. For the post-structuralists, this deconstructive privileging of the signifier over the traditionally privileged signified was emancipatory, generating new and unexpected meanings that pointed up the contingency of entrenched belief systems.

However, the artists praised by Kraus and those influenced by him, were attempting to maintain the bond between the surface arrangement of signifiers of an artwork and the *Idea* – the interlocking structure of all concepts which forms a supra-subjective understanding of social existence. Kraus's ideal artist possessed 'integrity' insofar as their art and the life they lived were one: only in this way could they hope to produce art that was an authentic reflection of the Idea.[22] His objection to the writing of *Jung Wien* – Bahr, Schnitzler, Zweig – was that their polished, stylized products were a kind of 'literary positivism', the aesthetic equivalent of the laissez-faire economics of the *Gründerzeit*.[23] They arranged words, images and feelings into beautiful self-contained forms to please readers, without regard for their connection to truth.

Jacqueline Rollfinke, *The Call of Human Nature: The Role of Scatology in Modern German Literature* (Massachusetts UP, 1986), 78.

[18] All discussed in Chapter 1.

[19] In 1929, Edward Franklin Hauch wrote that Büchner had become a 'truly dynamic factor in the intellectual and literary life of the present generation', showing that in the previous three decades cultural actors had forced German scholars to take a renewed interest in the writer after a previously lukewarm response; 'The Reviviscence of Georg Büchner', *PMLA*, 44(3) (Sep., 1929), 892-900; 892.

[20] Allen Janik and Stephen Toulmin, *Wittgenstein's Vienna* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1973), 81.

[21] Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference* [1967], trans. Alan Bass (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978), 25.

[22] Janik, *Wittgenstein's Vienna*, 81.

[23] Janik, *Wittgenstein's Vienna*, 80.

Büchner, by contrast, was the archetypal integral artist: his writing was an extension of his revolutionary activities and of his scientific work. *Woyzeck* in particular draws attention to an unjust social system that mercilessly exploits its most vulnerable members in the same way as the socialist pamphlet *Der Hessische Landbote* (1834) he risked his own life to distribute among the people. Further, the meticulous research carried out in writing it and the consequent scientific objectivity with which he dissected the whole affair is one with his own anatomical research into fish and amphibians. Since both Büchner's strong sense of injustice as well as his belief in the efficacy of the scientific method came directly from his own self-knowledge and experience, his art could not help but be rooted in the life of the community and thus a true reflection of the Idea.

Woyzeck does not just live up to Kraus's beliefs about what art ought to be, it also engages in the same sort of satire that he was known for, directed towards the distortion, the misuse and the degradation of language. Much of Kraus's ire was spent on language that was designed to deliberately mislead: the enemy here was the 'black magic' of newsprint which acted as a mouthpiece for plutocrats and the political establishment that acted in their name. In adopting the ready-made opinions slogans and clichés of the journalists, the readers stopped being responsible for their own language and their inner life atrophied. Thus, defective language in any individual became an outward sign of moral decay, but was most serious in the artist, who was meant to counteract the pernicious influence of the press. As Allan Janik and Stephen Toulmin put it: 'The fallacies in a man's logic as well as the defects of his character […] are reflected in his style of writing and in the very structure of his sentences'.[24] Word ought to bear a naïve relation to the Idea, as is the case for true writers: 'There are two kinds of writers, those who are and those who are not. In the first category, form and content belong together as body and soul; in the second, form and content match as body and dress'.[25]

Büchner makes a similar critique of language in *Woyzeck*. The Captain uses empty tautologies to bully Woyzeck in order to confirm his superiority in the hierarchy: 'Woyzeck, you've got no morals. Morals, that's when people are moral, you see. It's such a good word'. It is good, however, precisely it props up a code that absolves him of all responsibility to think through anything himself: 'You've got a child without the blessing of the church, as our reverend padre puts it, without the blessing of the church; it's not me that says so'.[26] Woyzeck, who has no access to the social, moral and intellectual formulations of the educated class, immediately sees that the Captain's language marks it out, not as a bearer of deeper truth, but something that is worn like an expensive suit. 'You see, us common folk, we don't have no virtue, all we got is our nature; but if I was a gent with an 'at and a watch and a nice

[24] Janik, *Wittgenstein's Vienna*, 68.
[25] Karl Kraus, *Sprüche und Widersprüche* (1909), 111; translation in Goehr, 'Schoenberg and Kraus', 65
[26] Georg Büchner, *Woyzeck* in *Complete Plays, Lenz and Other Writings*, trans. John Reddick (London: Penguin, 1993), 119. 'Woyzeck, er hat keine Moral! Moral das ist wenn man moralisch ist, versteht er. Es ist ein gutes Wort. Er hat ein Kind, ohne den Segen der Kirche, wie unser hochehrwürdiger Herr Garnisonsprediger sagt, ohne den Segen d. Kirche, es ist nicht von mir'; *Woyzeck* (H4) in Georg Büchner, *Werke und Brief*, ed. by Karl Pörnbacher et al (München: Carl Hanser, 1988), 223. Set by Berg in *Wozzeck*.

smart coat and could talk all posh, I'd be virtuous alright'.[27] In the scene in the Doctor's surgery, Woyzeck's lack of vocabulary again sees him frustrated by his attempts to express his thoughts: 'You see, Doctor, some people just have that sort of character, that sort of structure to 'em. – But with nature it's different you see, when it comes to nature [*he snaps his fingers*], it's kind of, what I mean is, for instance …'. Yet there is something more authentic about Woyzeck's utterances as he at least tries to think through his experiences when compared to the Doctor's ability to slot what he observes into predetermined categories. 'Woyzeck, you have the most beautiful *aberratio mentalis partalis*, category two, such a beautiful example'.[28]

In both these scenes, language is an 'embellishment' used for self-aggrandizement or a 'refuge' that obscures the essential immorality of his actions.[29] In tracing Woyzeck's own language throughout the play, it is evident that Büchner would have agreed with Kraus when he wrote: 'That a man is a murderer need not indicate anything about his style, but his style can indicate that he is a murderer'.[30] Woyzeck is only able to commit his crime only when he has given up the capacity for free critical thought by internalising the fixed linguistic forms of his superiors. While he was able to resist the formation of the symbolic/linguistic 'I', his thought, if not his body, lay outside the power structure and he was, to that limited extent, free; he only becomes fully subjectivized when he learns to speak the language or, in Lacanian terms, when the language starts to speak him. For Walter Benjamin, who attended a number of Kraus's theatrical performances, by cannibalising and regurgitating the texts of his enemies Kraus was able to call their authors 'back to their origin' thereby revealing the moral significance of their words.[31] In *Woyzeck*, Büchner cannibalised the language of an entire class, calling it back to its origin by demonstrating how flimsy but familiar linguistic constructs were able to mask an unjust social structure.

Engineering Social Utopia

The Doctor's mistreatment of the disenfranchised Woyzeck might be encouraged by a corrupt system but is itself personal. His callous indifference to the suffering of others, his drive for status and Woyzeck's own misery are all the result of the decisions and actions of individuals. For the audience in 1914, however, the Doctor-Woyzeck relationship was now being repeated by states against whole pop-

[27] Trans. Reddick, Complete Plays, 120. 'Sehn Sie, wir gemeinen Leut, das hat keine Tugend, es kommt einem nur so die Natur, aber wennich ein Herr wär un hätt ein Hut u. eine Uhr und eine anglaise, und könnt vornehm redden ich wollt schon tugendhaft sein'; (H4), Pörnbacher, Büchner, *Werke*, 224. Set by Berg.
[28] Reddick, 122. 'Sehn sie, Herr Doktor, manchmal hat man so n'en Charakter, so n'e Struktur. – Aber mit der Natur ist's was andres, sehn sie mit der Natur (*er kracht mit den Fingern*) das ist so was, wie soll ich doch sagen, z.B.'; 'Woyzeck er hat die schönste aberration mentalis partialis, zweite Spezies, sehr schön ausgeprägt'; (H4), Pörnbacher, 226. Set by Berg.
[29] John Reddick, *Georg Büchner: The Shattered Whole* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1994), 336.
[30] Karl Kraus, 'Maximilian Harden: Eine Erledigung', *Die Fackel* 234 (1907), 6; quoted in translation in Timothy Youker, ' "The Sounds of Deeds": Karl Kraus and Acoustic Quotation', *Theatre Journal* 63 (2011), 85-100; 88.
[31] Walter Benjamin, *Reflections: Essays, Aphorisms, Autobiographical Writings*, trans. E F N Jephcott, Peter Demetz (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1978), 260.

ulations, with doctors the instruments of public health policy. David Rothman has argued that, in the nineteenth century, 'human experimentation was a cottage industry, with individual physicians trying out one or other remedy on neighbors or relatives or themselves'.[32] As the nineteenth-century desire to reveal scientifically the 'truths of the inner self' gave way to the twentieth-century emphasis on 'utopian social engineering' so the site of experimentation shifted from the individual to the whole of society.[33]

One example of this from the years 1906-13, widely reported in the press at the time, was the manner in which the colonial administration dealt with the epidemic of sleeping sickness in the indigenous population of German East Africa and Togo.[34] The Reich government were mindful of the massive toll that the disease had taken in neighbouring British-occupied Uganda on the population, or 'organische Stammkapital' as it was known according to the logic of 'koloniale Menschenökonomie'.[35] By 1906 it was already known, from experiments on animals, that the organic arsenical Atoxyl could kill trypanosome – the virus responsible for sleeping sickness.[36] Due to 'ethical reserves' and 'legal restrictions', trials of the compound could not be carried out in the *Kaiserreich*. However, the same experiments were 'easily practicable at the colonial periphery' especially in Africa where the population were 'well under the control of the colonial authorities'. After an initial expedition organized by a committee of Reich government departments under the direction of Robert Koch 1906/07, it was felt that 'the colony itself had to be chosen as a laboratory' and all the sleeping sickness patients en masse 'became the objects of therapeutical and pharmacological research'. In Togo from 1908, following the example of their British neighbours, the German authorities set up isolated concentration camps of around 1000 people in areas with no tsetse flies – essential to the life cycle of the trypanosome.

The economic need of the colonists to wipe out the disease had to contend with the understandable resistance of the population to both the diagnosis – which involved a painful injection in the lymph gland – and the chemotherapy – which had severe side effects ranging from nausea through blindness to death. They were quick to introduce a number of punitive measures: attempt to conceal infection was punished by 'imprisonment and forced labour of up to six weeks'; refusal to be examined and isolated got you a 'detention of up to four weeks'. From 1909, the camps were required to dispense their own punishment for infringements on site, patients/inmates who tried to escape the arsenic injections – and many ran away repeatedly – would be beaten with a rope (an established form of chas-

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[32] David Rothman, 'Research, Human: Historical Aspects' in *Encyclopedia of Bioethics*, ed. Warren Thomas Reich (New York: Macmillan, 1995), 2249.
[33] Jordan Goodman, Anthony McElligott, Lara Marks, 'Making Human Bodies Useful: Historicizing Medical Experiments in the Twentieth Century' in *Useful bodies: Humans in the Service of Medical Science in the Twentieth Century*, ed. idem (Baltimore: John Hopkins UP, 2003), 2.
[34] For more on German colonialism, see Shelley Baranowski, *Nazi Empire: German Colonialism and Imperialism from Bismarck to Hitler* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2010).
[35] Wolfgang U. Eckart, 'Medical Experiments at the Colonial Periphery: The Fight Against Sleeping Sickness in German East Africa and Togo' in *Twentieth-Century Ethics of Human Subjects Research: Historical Perspectives on Values, Practices, and Regulation*s, ed. Volker Roelcke, Giovanni Maio, Institut für Medizin- und Wissenschaftsgeschichte (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2004), 65-82; 74.
[36] Eckart, 'Medical Experiments', 65-6.

tisement in Togo).[37] The camp doctors claimed that they spent more time administering punishments (in terms of bureaucracy) than they did 'treating' the patients.[38] It was, for the German speaker in 1914, the story of *Woyzeck* writ large.[39]

But the wish to control populations by scientific means was not confined to the 'colonial periphery', 'utopian social engineering' was also on the political agenda closer to home. Given the amount effort that has gone into tracing the roots of Nazism, it is well known that, in the run up to the First World War, radical German Nationalists like the Pan-German league, who were arguing for a war in the East to prevent the 'Russification' and 'Magyarisation' of German settlers, propagated a view of international relations governed by a Darwinian struggle among European races for survival. And, although opposition by the Catholic Centre, the Social Democrats and left-wing liberals prevented the government passing anti-miscegenation legislation in 1913, the Citizenship Law still defined citizenship based on 'community of descent'.[40] (This also allowed German Jews to be classed as non-citizens, much as members of the second- and third-generation Turkish community still are today.)

However, a simple equation of social Darwinism with proto-fascism obscures the extent to which Darwinism was regarded as a politically neutral scientific fact, whose moral consequences were widely contested. As Leornard Moore puts it, 'social Darwinism is popularly perceived as a rationalization for racism, imperialism, patriarchy, and class exploitation', but goes on to argue that this is simplistic and misleading.[41] Darwinian discourse afforded the 'philosophical infrastructure' for any number of conflicting viewpoints and social Darwinism 'cannot be defined by its ideological functions or equated with a particular political position'.[42] None other than Büchner's brother Ludwig, himself a doctor, was one of the first to realize that Darwin's theories might have ethical implications: 'As the new conception of nature gradually prevails, it will produce, I believe, one of the greatest transformations and one of the greatest advances, which human knowledge has ever undergone.... At the same time a clarity and simplicity never before suspected will enter our entire philosophy'.[43] Without a transcendent soul to imbue each individual with an inalienable *sanctity of life*, the human body became for many a fungible item of property, valued only for its contribution to the community/racial group/state. [44]

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[37] Eckart, 'Medical Experiments', 77.
[38] Eckart, 'Medical Experiments', 79.
[39] It should be pointed out that recent work on British colonization has shown that scientists were often the lone voice of dissent in the colonial project. It is likely that a similar situation obtained for scientists in German colonies. Helen Tilley, *Africa as a Living Laboratory: Empire, Development and the Problem of Scientific Knowledge, 1970-1950* (Chicago: Chicago UP).
[40] Baranowski, *Nazi Empire*.
[41] Mike Hawkins, *Social Darwinism in European and American Thought, 1860-1945: Nature as Model and Nature as Threat* (New York: Cambridge UP, 1997).
[42] Hawkins, *Social Darwinism*, 296.
[43] Ludwig Büchner to Hermann Schaafhausen, 11 July 1863 (University of Bonn Library, Handschriftenabteilung, S 2620a). 325-6 in Richard Weikart, 'Darwinism and Death: Devaluing Human Life in Germany 1859-1920', *Journal of the History of Ideas* 63(2) (Apr., 2002), 323-344; 325; he hasn't included the original German.
[44] Hans Walter Schmuhl, *Rassenhygiene, Nationalsozialismus, Euthanasie. Von der Verhütung zur Vernichtung 'lebensunwerten Lebens' 1890-1945* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1987), 18-9.

Theoretically, this made ethical decisions with regard to disease and death a lot simpler: if the death of the individual benefitted the species then that death could be considered to be progressive and therefore life-enhancing.[45] It also lead to arguments against equality, particularly socialist egalitarianism, universal human rights and their humanitarian implications.[46] For the eugenicists, those who were economically unproductive – through disease, mental illness, old age – were an economic burden, and those with congenital defects threatened to weaken the species if they reproduced. While few advocated destroying such people, there were plenty of calls for voluntary euthanasia (Ernst Haekel proposed that *Selbstmord* (suicide) should be renamed *Selbstauflösung* (self-redemption)), for making abortion more readily available, and for discouraging certain people from having children (women over 45, for example).[47] The main arguments against eugenics were, firstly, pragmatic, it is too difficult to decide who should be terminated and on what grounds.[48] Secondly, neo-Kantians such as Wilhelm Dilthey, who were in the majority in the universities, argued that a separation should be made between *Naturwissenschaft* and *Geisteswissenschaft*, and that advances in the former should not be brought to bear on moral questions in the latter.[49] Thirdly, Alfred Ploetz, the founder of the eugenics movement in Germany, realized that enforcing his own ideas 'would wreak havoc with our social instincts'.[50]

Artists of the period, often influenced by Nietzsche's idiosyncratic take on the matter, were keen to explore Darwinism and its social implications. Kafka, whose work Berg greeted with great enthusiasm when he finally discovered it just after finishing *Wozzeck*, provides perhaps the best example.[51] According Paul Heller, in many of his letters and works Kafka echoed the campaigns of Jakob von Uexküll and Josef Popper-Lynkeus (whom Berg had read before 1908 and was 'tremendously enthusiastic' about) against the vulgar social Darwinism and racial hygiene theories of Haekel.[52] (Heller also argues that Kafka's device of narrating from an animal's point of view was borrowed from the 'subjective' biology of Uexküll.[53]) In 'The Hunger Artist' ('Ein Hungerkünstler', 1922), Kafka tried to demonstrate – through post-naturalist literary experiment – that the human being was capable of breaking its biological programming, even to the extent of not eating for extended periods of time (caged like a circus animal, although willingly in the name of art, the hunger artist fasts for the biblical 40 days and 40

[45] Weissman, 'Über Leben und Tod' (1881); Arnold Dodel, *Moses Oder Darwin?* (1889); quotations from both in Weikart, 332.
[46] Oscar Schmidt, 'Darwinismus und Socialdemokratie', *Deutsche Rundschau*, 17 (1878), 289-90; Hellwald, *Kulturgeschichte in ihrer natürliche Entwicklung bis zur Gegenwart* (Augsburg: Butsch, 1875), 720; Weikart, 333.
[47] Weikart, 'Darwinism and Death', 333-7.
[48] Wilhelm Börner, 'Euthanasie (Eine Erwiderung)', *Das monistische Jahrhundert,* 2, (1913), 249-54.
[49] Weikart, 'Darwinism and Death', 342.
[50] Alfred Ploetz, 'Ableitung einer Rassenhygiene und ihrer Beziehung zur Ethik', *Vierteljahresschrift für wissenschaftliche Philosophie*, 19 (1895), 370; quoted in Weikart, 339.
[51] Soma Morgenstern gave Berg a copy of *Der Landarzt* (1919) for his birthday, who phoned him after two days asking 'Why have you never told me about him? Why have I never heard of him?' Joan Allen Smith, 'Berg's Character Remembered' in *The Berg Companion*, ed. Douglas Jarman (London: Macmillan, 1989), 13-32; 21.
[52] Paul Heller, *Franz Kafka: Wissenschaft und Wissenschaftskritik*, Stauffenburg Colloquium 10 (Tübingen: Stauffenburg, 1989), 143-59. Helene gave Berg Popper's *A Realist's Fantasies* – banned by the Austrian censors at the time – for his saint day present in 1908: Berg to Helene 18 August 1908, *Alban Berg: Letters to his Wife*, 40.
[53] Heller, *Kafka*, 156-78.

nights). Margot Norris holds that 'A Report to the Academy' ('Ein Bericht für eine Akademie', 1917), also an ironic twist on naturalism, was inspired by Nietzsche's view that evolution is not progress but decadence.[54] The ape, who delivers a scientific report on his own 'evolution' from animal to human, only imitates human reason as a means of escape from its predicament as a captive of humans. Like the Doctor, the ape adopts the sadism (or at least indifference) towards the suffering of its animal subjects.[55] In a link with how the pre-Darwinian Büchner already saw language, civilization, and reason as ornamental dress, Norris argues that, for Kafka, rhetoric is just a form of 'camouflage'.[56]

The tension in *Woyzeck* between the compulsion to take care of biological needs and the ability of the civilized man to exert their free will in order to overcome them, precludes it being read as a critique of the basic assumption of the vulgar social Darwinians – that evolution can be equated with progress. It may well, in *Woyzeck*-world, be nearly impossible for humans to break their biological programming, however what Büchner did was to show that a secular form of the 'sanctity of life' does still exist either in spite of our true nature as folded up bits of an unfeeling physical universe, or as animals struggling against nature and other humans for survival. Morality, as Schopenhauer had already observed, does not require a soul or God, but simply a recognition of the self in the other.[57]

Naturalism and Expressionism

As Christopher Innes observes, naturalism has remained to this day the default style since its inception, and so it is to be expected that modernism is often recognized by the fact that it is not naturalism.[58] (He also provides a useful way of distinguishing between naturalism and realism: *realism* is the effect Naturalists strove for in the theatre; *naturalism* was the theoretical underpinning of the Naturalist movement from about 1880-1910.[59]) *Woyzeck*, published just as Zola's theoretical writing was beginning to filter into Germany, provided a blueprint for how German Naturalism might look.[60] But the play is not straightforwardly realist and the ways in which it departs from the naturalist paradigm resonated with various of the routes out taken by various types of modernism. Indeed, the only way of seeing Expressionism as a coherent entity is that all of it relates in some way to Naturalism, parodying it (as in the Kafka stories), developing or exaggerating its tendencies or even by self-consciously rejecting it altogether (like the poetry of George and his circle). No one believes any more in the crude dichotomy that Jameson calls the 'ideology of modernism', in which realism was seen as out of date and naïve, where-

[54] Margot Norris, 'Darwin, Nietzsche, Kafka, and the Problem of Mimesis', *Modern Language Notes* 95(5), Comparative Literature (Dec., 1980), 1232-1253; 1247.
[55] Norris, 'Mimesis', 1250.
[56] Norris, 'Mimesis', passim.
[57] See Chapter 1.
[58] Christopher Innes (ed.), 'Introduction', *A Sourcebook on Naturalist Theatre* (London & New York: Routledge, 2000), 1.
[59] Innes, *Naturalist Theatre*, 5-6
[60] Some early critics of the opera were quick to point out how the grotesquery of Berg's music suited the naturalistic style of the text: Karl Westermeyer, 'Nochmals: *Wozzeck*', *Signale für die musikalische Welt* 85 (1927), 107-09.

as modernism was thought of as self-reflexive, sophisticated and still relevant to the present.[61] But the interplay between realism and fantasy or between science-like objectivity and sensual or emotional subjectivity, which already existed in naturalism's amalgam of styles and modes, did become more explicit in expressionism, subverting the idea that either realist or romantic modes have any unique claim to truth.[62]

So, while *Woyzeck* can be considered proto-naturalist, it also points the way beyond it to other types of realism. Naturalism was often presented as the attempt to '[transpose] into literature and art of the means of investigation employed by science for the study of earthly phenomena'.[63] However, Zola never forgot that, whatever empirical data may be incorporated into art, its status as art meant that ultimately it was always going to be exploring subjective responses to objective phenomena.[64] The problem was that, as critics like Franz Mehring and Georg Lukács have argued, naturalism could very easily slip into poverty tourism, with comfortable middle-class audiences seeking out the exotic thrill that temporary immersion into a world of squalor and decay could bring.[65] *Woyzeck* offered a guide for writers like Brecht who wished to harness the ability of naturalism to penetrate material reality but also to show how things might be changed – to create art that might incite revolution.[66] Whereas Naturalism often strove to present a fair portrait of the class situation – going so far, in *Germinal* (1885), for example, as to show how the mine owners were just as much victims of circumstance as the miners – *Woyzeck* was designed, like *Der Hessian Landbote*, to educate its audience to the nature of the social injustice, and thereby bring about change. This is not to suggest that parody was not employed generously in Naturalism too, but while Naturalist parody provoked a nod of recognition on the part of the audience, the archetypes in *Woyzeck*, whose two-dimensionality renders them far from realistic, were designed to bring unalloyed condemnation on the whole oppressive class.[67]

With its alienated central character, *Woyzeck* again provided a template for the psychological realism that writers like Herman Bahr were calling for as a way of developing naturalism.[68] Bahr thought that 'sensations are the only truth' and that literature should imitate the precognitive fleeting

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[61] Fredrick Jameson, *A Singular Modernity: Essay on the Ontology of the Present* (New York: Verso, 2002), 139ff.
[62] For a definition of modernism along these lines with regards to realism and fantasy, see Paul Coates, *The Realist Fantasy* (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1983), 8.
[63] Zola's contemporary Henry Céard in David Baguley, 'The Nature of Naturalism' in *Naturalism in the European Novel: New Critical Perspectives*, ed. Brian Nelson (New York & Oxford: Berg, 1992), 13-26; 15-6.
[64] 'Une oeuvre d'art est un coin de la nature, vu à travers un tempérament', printed in the third issue of *Die Gesellschaft* (1885), the German journal of naturalism. Walter Frisch, *German Modernism: Music and the Arts* (Berkeley: California UP, 2005), 38.
[65] Wolfgang Beutin et al, *A History of German Literature: From the Beginnings to the Present Day*, 4th ed., trans. Clare Krojzl (London and New York: Routledge, 1993), 398.
[66] Beutin, *German Literature*, 399.
[67] Baguley argues that in order to keep up the pretension of realism, irony and satire had to remain implicit: 'Nature of Naturalism', 19.
[68] Berg was also influenced by the proto-expressionism of Strindberg (he mentions him many times in the letters to Helene and he even had a bust of the playwright in his room). Some commentators have even gone so far as to suggest that the musical structures in *Wozzeck* are indebted to Strindberg (especially *There are Crimes and Crimes* (1899)): David P. Schroeder, 'Berg's *Wozzeck* and Strindberg's Musical Models', *Opera Journal* 21 (1988), 2-12.

sensations on the nerves that are prior to the 'I', since the 'truth' and the 'I' were incompatible.[69] While this kind of extreme subjectivity appears to be the very opposite of the objectivity of Naturalism, it actually grew directly out of the scientist's sensual apprehension of the world. It is a subjective correlate to the objectivity of science: in making accurate observations of objective phenomena the modern scientific mind becomes highly attuned to the sensations through which they become apparent. Bahr's ideas mirror those of physicist Ernst Mach's positivism (or 'neutral monism'), in which he argued that the only truth is precognitive sensory perception, and that all objective phenomena are just useful mental constructs that bear no relation to material reality (the connection with Kant's transcendental induction is clear here).[70] This was all latent in *Woyzeck* and required Berg's subject-centred music to make it explicit.[71] But he would have seen how this could be done from novels like Knut Hamsun's *Hunger* (1890), which deals with the mental delusions brought on by starvation (of sexual appetites as well as gustatory) from an exclusively subject-centred view.[72]

Some later Naturalists and Expressionists tried to introduce the transcendent into ordinary everyday life – to re-enchant (to use Weber's contemporaneous formulation) a modernity that had lost contact with mythical and religious modes of thought.[73] Schoenberg, and the *Blaue Reiter* Expressionism he associated with, felt it that they were channelling the artist's true soul or channelling nature through their work.[74] (Although, again, the impetus here is scientific, conceptually drawing on Freud and Breuer's work on hysteria and the repression of animal desires.) Further, the goal of Expressionist theatre was to create the 'ecstatic vision' in which the future utopia that society was striving towards could be glimpsed (this was also found in Schoenberg's Expressionism, particularly *Die glückliche Hand* (1924)).[75]

However, *Woyzeck* had more in common with the sort of Expressionism that eschews neo-romantic metaphysics, and instead focuses, like Büchner, on trying to find enchantment and a mythical basis for community within secular modernity itself rather than positing some external entity. Brian Johnston has argued that Ibsen – another one of Berg's idols – was not attempting to recreate or record modernity in his work, but rather 'to *transform* this modernity so that it would take on the identity of

[69] Hermann Bahr, Zur Überwingdung des Naturalismus: Theoretsche Schriften 1887-1904, ed. Gotthart Wunberg (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1968), 47; translation in Frisch, *German Modernism*, 46.
[70] Gereon Wolters, 'Mach', *A Companion to the Philosophy of Science*, ed. W. H. Newton-Smith (Malden and Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), 252-56.
[71] For a discussion of the expressionist quality of the Büchner text, see Gary Schmidgall, 'Chapter 9: Alban Berg: *Wozzeck'* in idem, *Literature as Opera*, (New York: Oxford UP, 1977), 287-319.
[72] Berg said he 'still admires [Hamsun] very much', and that he had read his first five novels; *Hunger* was the first. Berg to Helene 25 July 1909, *Letters to His Wife*, 72.
[73] Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* [1904-5] (London: Unwin University Books, 1971), 181-3.
[74] Konrad Boehmer (ed). *Schönberg and Kandinsky: An Historic Encounter*, (Harwood: Amsterdam, 1997).
[75] David F. Kuhns, *German Expressionist Theatre: The Actor and the Stage* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1997), 17.

the mythopoeic, myth-saturated world of his imagination, to render reality occult, in fact'.[76] I discussed in the previous chapter how Büchner similarly mythologizes rationality and the scientific method by imbuing the results of his empirical investigation – i.e. the play itself – with a subtle magical overlay.

In its square-jawed acceptance of the fatalistic consequences of science and its outright rejection of romantic idealism, *Woyzeck* is perhaps closest to the poetry of Gottfried Benn.

Schöne Jugend
Der Mund eines Mädchens, das lange im Schilf gelegen hatte,
sah so angeknabbert aus.
Als man die Brust aufbrach, war die Speiseröhre so löcherig.
Schließlich in einer Laube unter dem Zwerchfell
fand man ein Nest von jungen Ratten.
Ein kleines Schwesterchen lag tot.
Die andern lebten von Leber und Niere,
tranken das kalte Blut und hatten
hier eine schöne Jugend verlebt.
Und schön und schnell kam auch ihr Tod:
Man warf sie allesamt ins Wasser.
Ach, wie die kleinen Schnauzen quietschten![77]

Benn had just undertaken an autopsy course as part of his medical training when the five poem pamphlet *Morgue* (1912), from which this poem is taken, was published.[78] He was considered an Expressionist, but in the same way that Büchner was critiquing the nebulous mysticism of some of the Romantics, Benn shows contempt for the utopian visions of other expressionists, like Kandinsky and Schoenberg. In an aesthetic similar to that of *Woyzeck*, medical jargon is used to depict the human being as an animal that rots and decays with no soul through which redemption can come. The flippant tone challenges the reader not to feel anything for the victims, which would be exactly the sort of scientific dispassion required for Ploetz or Haekel's eugenicist ideas to be implemented. The message here is simple: despite the fact that the individual has no intrinsic worth as far as nature is concerned, its life is still sacred to other humans. The most important thing worth preserving from post-Enlightenment Europe, the humanitarianism of the nineteenth century, doesn't require any deep metaphysical truth – no soul, no God, not even the hope of future utopia – in order to generate profound spiritual feeling directed towards other members of the species. Even in the despair that saturates the work of both Büchner and Benn, respect for the sanctity of life is always present.

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[76] Brian Johnston, 'The Dangerous Seductions of the Past: Ibsen's Counter-Discourse to Modernity', in Frederick J. Marker & Christopher Innes (eds.), *Modernism in European Drama: Ibsen Strindberg, Pirandello, Beckett* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), 3-17.
[77] Gottfried Benn, *Primal Vision: Selected Writings of Gottfried Benn*, trans. E. B. Ashton (New York: New Directions, 1971), 213-14.
[78] *A History of German Literature*, 426ff.

ADAPTATIONS

Music critics' assessments of *Wozzeck* as either nihilist or redemptive have endured because of the way that Berg went about adapting the play. I shall argue that the libretto is not so much a 'remarkably authentic practical version of the drama', as Perle would have it, but reflects the attempt to impose upon it a set of aesthetic values drawn in part from Schopenhauer, Nietzsche and Wagner.[79] The cuts may seem slight, but they actually distort Büchner's intentions and force his focus on finding a median path between science and spirituality into the background. Moreover the distortion and changes in focus are reinforced by the music, particularly in the most prominent places that are bound to shape critical reception.

Berg the Wagnerian

It is difficult to pin Berg's philosophical and artistic creed down precisely and, as Rainer Bischof has observed, he was not a theoretician, and didn't come up with a unified and coherent position in the manner of Schoenberg or Skryabin.[80] In his letters to his then fiancé Helene, between 1907 and 1909, he does make the odd statement about his beliefs, although, instead of discussing ideas, he was fond of simply citing the names of 'our heroes', often in long lists.[81] Apart from Kraus, Ibsen and Strindberg, Berg was heir to a complex of ideas that had grown up with the anti-liberal Pernerstorfer circle in Vienna in the 1870s which, from the 1880s, numbered another of Berg's heroes, Mahler, amongst its members.[82] Their aesthetics drew primarily on the writing of Schopenhauer, Wagner and the early Schopenhauer-saturated Nietzsche of *The Birth of Tragedy* (*Die Geburt der Tragödie*, hereafter *BT*, 1872) and *Untimely Meditations* (*Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen,* 1873).[83] As William McGrath cautions, their Nietzsche was not the one we are familiar with today from *Beyond Good and Evil* (*Jenseits von Gut und Böse*, 1886) and *On the Genealogy of Morality* (*Zur Genealogie der Moral*, 1887) and they tended to understand the later works in terms of *BT*, which they saw as a materialist rewriting of Schopenhauer's hazy metaphysics.[84]

Berg still found it 'inconceivable and despicable' when Nietzsche attacked Wagner, which might be seen as evidence that he was still a *BT*-Nietzschean, unlike Strauss, for instance, who, by the 1890s, had already fully digested the anti-Wagnerian implications of the later writings.[85] He even sided with Wagner and early Nietzsche against hero number one Kraus, who, after 1905, became increasing-

[79] George Perle, *The Operas of Alban Berg: Volume I: Wozzeck* (Berkeley: California UP, 1980), 35.
[80] Rainer Bischof, 'Versuch über die philosophischen Grundlagen von Alban Berg' in *Alban Berg Symposion Wien 1980: Tagungsbericht*, ed. Rudolf Klein (Wien: Universal Edition,1981), 209-15.
[81] Alban Berg, *Alban Berg: Briefe an seine Frau*, ed. Helene Nahowski Berg (München: A. Langen-G. Müller, 1965).
[82] William J. McGrath, *Dionysian Art and Populist Politics in Austria* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1974), 1.
[83] McGrath, *Dionysian Art*, 54.
[84] McGrath, *Dionysian Art*, 2.
[85] Charles Youmans, 'The Role of Nietzsche in Richard Strauss's Artistic Development', *The Journal of Musicology* 21(3) (Summer 2004), 309-342.

ly critical of the Wagnerian project.[86] The Pernerstorfers formulated their ideals in the shadow of the stock market crash of 1873 that brought to an end the boom years of the *Gründerzeit* when technological and scientific innovation combined with a good dose of British-style market liberalism were thought to be the medicine for all ills. In the Vienna of the 1900s, Nietzsche wasn't so much read critically as seen as a 'symbol for a new style of life': his critique of science, reason and progress meant that he was worshipped as an irrationalist 'spiritual leader' by those who wished to live 'a Bohemian and libertine existence'.[87] Although Berg himself enjoyed the comforts of modern life, he too rejected the idea that technological progress, although it might provide material comfort and sensual pleasure, would automatically bring about moral betterment.[88] In a letter of 1909 he insisted that 'our [he and Helene] and the world's salvation will not come through Zeppelins and motor cars'; displaying his Nietzschean/Krausian distrust of democracy, 'the crowd are always wrong'; and his contempt for the German emperor who is 'the antithesis of everything I believe in'.[89]

Berg didn't mention the correlate of these views, a belief in an alternative way of living whereby all German speakers would come together, bound by a common mythology celebrated in festivals like the one at Bayreuth.[90] Or that the Austrians would be the cultural leaders in such an arrangement.[91] He did, however, experience what Schopenhauer thought of as Will-less contemplation of the Will, in which Wagner and Nietzsche, albeit in more materialist terms, felt the redemptive potential of art lay.[92] He experienced the loss of self in which 'as if there were nothing left in the world but this music [a Mahler symphony]', claiming to Helene that he felt guilty because he had even forgotten about her during the climactic moments.[93] Similarly, he felt that a performance of *Parsifal* (1882) at Bayreuth was a 'magnificent, overwhelming', 'stirring, uplifting experience' and that '[words] cannot give you anywhere

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[86] Susanne Rode-[Breymann], 'Wagner und die Folgen: Zur Nietzsche-Wagner-Rezeption bei Alban Berg und Anton Webern' in 'Der Fall Wagner': *Ursprünge und Folgen von Nietzsches Wagner-Kritik*, ed. Thomas Steiert (Laaber: Laaber Verlag, 1991), 265-91.

[87] Alfred Pfabigan, 'Freud's "Vienna Middle" ' in *Rethinking Vienna 1900*, ed. Steven Beller (New York & Oxford: Berghahn, 2001), 154-70, 165. Nietzsche never wanted humanity to return to noble morality when we behaved like 'blond beasts' – acting according to whim, however violent – since it was only with the Judeo-Christian priests that man became '*an interesting animal*' (*GM* I, 6). He wanted to preserve this interestingness – responsible for culture and art – by accepting and sublimating our animal natures rather than feeling *guilty* about them.

[88] After the success of *Wozzeck*, Berg bought a dark blue Ford Cabriolet and delighted in driving his friends around the mountains. Morgenstern reports that on his drives Berg distributed packs of cigarettes to road workers to assuage his guilt at his capitalist behaviour. Allen Smith, 'Berg's Character Remembered', 18.

[89] Berg to Helene 25 July 1909, *Letters to his Wife*, 88.

[90] McGrath, *Dionysian Art*, 29.

[91] McGrath, *Dionysian Art*, 21.

[92] See (*WWR* I, 38) for Schopenhauer's discussion of aesthetic contemplation as denial of the Will. Contemplation of an artistic object allows one to imagine its Platonic form – a great painting of a particular dog allows one to imagine perfect universal Dogness – and in imagining this pure form one forgets one's own earthly self (i.e. the unceasing compulsion to act through which the Will makes itself manifest to consciousness). In (*WWR* I, 52) he discusses how music is the embodiment of the striving of the Will – presumably, the Platonic Idea of the Will – so that aesthetic contemplation of music leads to the odd situation where one is contemplating the Will (as the underlying principle of unity of everything) in order to forget the Will (as *principium individuationi*s and the cause of suffering).

[93] Undated 1907, *Letters to his Wife*, 32.

near the tremendous impression, shattering yet life-enhancing, which the is work made on me'.[94] Yet, he hated Bayreuth and the people who went there, finding the irreverent celebratory atmosphere and the concentration on beer and food at the expense of the music particularly offensive.[95] The materialism and worldly sensualism of the reality of Bayreuth did not come anywhere close to the deep religious experience that Nietzsche had thought would lead to a 'higher existence'.

Berg displayed an ambivalence towards religion and his own Catholic upbringing.[96] The one time Berg does write about Christianity in a letter to Helene, it is hard to be certain whether he was expressing his personal faith, speaking metaphorically or, as Joan Allen Smith has suggested, trying to get in his prospective in-laws' good books.[97]

> The triumph of all that is great and holy is not something from my imagination, it is from the reality within me which alone is decisive. After all, when Christ died on the Cross, killed on the instigation of his chief critics, the Pharisees, his triumph was not imaginary, but in the reality of his resurrection. And to follow him as best I can, I must seek my salvation in an ideal, pure reality of the spirit, a resurrection from the brutal materialism of ordinary life …[98]

Whatever his personal beliefs were, this suggests he had absorbed Wagner's Feuerbachism, that, regardless of its truth in historical fact, the Christian story has a universal mythical validity and serves as an analogy for a more fundamental truth.[99] This impression is further confirmed in a letter of around the same time where he uses an image from the famous 'God is dead' passage from Nietzsche's *The Gay Science* (*Die fröhliche Wissenschaft,* 1882/7) to reach almost the same conclusion. (He does not mention or allude to the famous phrase.) In answer to Helene's question 'what is our goal?' he answers that it is 'the perfection of each human soul', 'to become a good, honourable, noble character', going on 'Nietzsche uses the image of "new seas" towards which his ship is irresistibly heading'.[100] The passage is Aphorism 343, the first of Book V: 'Wir Furchtlosen', which concludes 'the sea, *our* [i.e. us 'free spirits'] sea, lies open again; maybe there has never been such an "open sea" '.[101] The point being that now Christianity – and religion in general – has been exposed for the superstitious nonsense it is, we should not be depressed that life now has no meaning, but see it as a 'new dawn', the opportunity to start again. The 'new seas' that Berg talks of, which is not a phrase used by Nietzsche, are those

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[94] 8 August 1909, *Letters to his Wife*, 83.
[95] 12 August 1909, *Letters to his Wife*, 85-6.
[96] Soma Morgenstern, *Alban Berg und seine Idole: Erinnerungen und Briefe* (Lüneburg: Dietrich zu Klampen, 2009). See Smith, 'Berg's Character Remembered', 19 and 29.
[97] Smith, 'Berg's Character Remembered', 19. Helene's parents' main objection to the marriage was Berg's sickliness, and so I find Smith's conjecture unconvincing.
[98] Undated, August 1909, *Letters to his Wife*, 90.
[99] John Deathridge, *Wagner: Beyond Good and Evil* (Berkeley: California UP, 2008), 48. Bryan Magee, *Wagner and Philosophy* (London: Penguin, 2001), 48-67.
[100] 23 August 1909, *Letters to his Wife*, 90-1.
[101] Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, trans. Josefine Naukhoff (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2001), 199. Original German: 'das Meer, unser Meer liegt wieder offen da, vielleicht gab es noch niemals ein so "offnes Meer" '.

available for exploration by the *post*-Christian 'free spirit' (i.e. the select intellectual/philosopher/artist to whom Nietzsche addressed his works).

Berg the Librettist

There is no need to rehearse the scholarly to-ing and fro-ing that led to the current understanding of precisely which editions of *Woyzeck* Berg used.[102] It is known he made his libretto in a copy of the play edited by Paul Landau edition of 1909, which contains the same reading of the manuscript supplied by Franzos in the first publication, but in a slightly different order.[103] Berg's 15 scenes occur in the same order they do in Landau's 25 – Redlich and Reich were wrong in their assertions that Berg reordered the scenes of the Franzos edition to create his dramatic structure.[104] It has also been shown that during the composition process, probably in 1921, Berg also used Georg Witkowski's 1920 edition to make sure his text was as close to what Büchner wrote as was possible.[105] (Witkowski, unlike Landau, had gone back to the original editions and improved on some of Franzos's free or erroneous readings.)

Jack M. Stein was perhaps justified in his assertion that the writing of musicologists who have considered Berg's libretto (chiefly Ploebsch and Perle) is 'pervaded by an aura of sychophancy'.[106] In his attempt to remedy this from a 'Germanist' perspective, he highlights some of the ways Berg got it wrong. For instance, he criticizes Berg's lack of backbone in refusing to set the word 'pissen', changing it instead to 'husten'. This is remedied in most modern productions, but Berg also changed '*musculus sphincter vesicae*' (bladder sphincter) to 'Zwerchfell' (diaphragm) – impossible to change back, and likely to confuse the anatomically informed. He also had to miss out a few choice exchanges that further weaken the effect of the scene – such as the Doctor trying to force a depleted Woyzeck to give a sample.[107] He also notes a number of trivial changes Berg made, perhaps for biographical reasons, like changing his diet from 'Erbsen' (peas) to 'Bohnen' (beans). However, where Berg has made major alterations, like conflating scenes, to suit his tripartite division, Stein agrees with his supposedly sycophantic musicological predecessors and ends up praising these for their economy and dramatic effectiveness.

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[102] This includes early work by Gerd Ploebsch, *Alban Bergs Wozzeck: Dramaturgie und musikalischer Aufbau* (Strasbourg, Baden-Baden: Verlag Heitz, 1968) and George Perle, '*Woyzeck* and *Wozzeck*', *Musical Quarterly* 53 (1967), 206-18; later by Ernst Hilmar, 'Die vershiedenen Entwicklungsstadien in den Kompositionsskizzen' in *50 Jahre* Wozzeck *von Alban Berg*, ed. Harald Goertz, Otto Kolleritsch, et al, (Graz: Universal Edition, 1978), 22-6; and, more recently, the Patricia Hall article mentioned in the introduction. Hall goes into elaborate detail about which editions were used at what time (Berg acquired ten versions of the play in all) in 'Chapter 5: Berg's Büchner Text and the Genesis of Form' in *Berg's* Wozzeck (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2011), 69-88.

[103] Georg Büchner, Wozzeck-Lenz*: Zwei Fragmente*, ed. Paul Landau (Leipzig: Insel Verlag, 1909).

[104] Jack M. Stein, 'From *Woyzeck* to *Wozzeck*: Alban Berg's Adaptation of Büchner', *Germanic Review* 47 (1972), 168-80; 169.

[105] Peter Petersen, 'Büchner aus zweiter Hand: Neue Thesen über Bergs *Wozzeck*-Libretto' in *Alban Berg Symposion Wien 1980*, 80-90.

[106] Stein, '*Woyzeck* to *Wozzeck*', 169.

[107] Stein, '*Woyzeck* to *Wozzeck*', 170.

Stein also points out that some of Franzos's misreadings, rewrites or additions are also actually quite successful. In some cases, however, it is difficult to know whether they have only become so because of Berg's music. For example, in the scene in the Doctor's office again, 'Zeig Er die Zunge' seems to be a much better ending for the scene than the pedestrian 'Zeig Er sei Puls!' that Büchner actually wrote, but is this because of Berg's brilliantly evocative tongue-sticking-out musical onomatopoeia? In Act II, scene ii, (H2, 7; H4, 9) where Wozzeck runs into the Doctor and Captain out walking, Franzos had inserted the line 'Der Mensch ist ein Abgrund, es schwindelt einem, wenn man hinunter schaut … Mich schwindelt …', which Büchner had crossed out in an earlier draft of the scene, and therefore does not appear in modern critical editions.[108] The opera would be unimaginable without this line, but, again, it is the music that makes it so memorable.

More seriously, the Landau ordering that Berg used is responsible for shifting the play's primary emphasis on metaphysical questions onto the secondary question of socially criticism. Franzos, Landau, and then Berg all give undue weight to issues of poverty and class distinction by beginning with the scene in which Woyzeck shaves the captain. Most modern editors agree that the play was meant to start with Woyzeck and Andres in the country collecting sticks (H4, 1), which puts the questions about social hierarchy and wealth into a broader context.[109] Woyzeck's terrifying visions betoken a play that investigates the meaning of human existence, the nature of reality itself, and the relationship between them, specifically between man and the natural world. The social dimension is going to be an essential part of this investigation, but it is not the central concern. (As I mentioned in Chapter 1, Woyzeck's vision of a head rolling at midnight was surely a premonition of his own decapitation which would have ended the play, giving it the circular form that Berg felt compelled to introduce musically. Franzos added the stage instruction 'Drowns' when Woyzeck goes to retrieve the bloody knife from the lake, which allowed Berg to end the opera in the way that he does.)

Berg was not merely cutting the text down for reasons of economy, drama, and structure. Far from slimming the play down and reorganizing it to fit his musical structures (scene-wise, act-wise and opera-wise), he had a clear set of philosophical ideas that he wanted to impose on the drama. I showed in Chapter 1 how *Woyzeck* asks the fundamental question: is man, through self-control, the exercise of free will, civilization, rationality or science able in any way to overcome either his animal nature or the fatalistic implications of inhabiting, and being constructed from the material of, a Newtonian deterministic universe. Büchner deliberately avoided coming to a conclusion by presenting each side of the argument negatively – parodically and *in extremis* so that neither side can be taken seriously. The Doctor and the Captain make the case that a civilized man can exercise complete control over

[108] References are to the original manuscripts H1-4, as explained in Chapter 1. These are reproduced (with unclear words clearly indicated) in Georg Büchner, *Werke und Briefe*, ed. Karl Pörnbacher et al (München: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1988, 1997), 197-232. The modern edition by Werner R. Lehmann is on pages 233-55, which I shall refer to in the text as an exemplary best guess at Büchner's intentions.

[109] John Reddick, *Georg Büchner: The Shattered Whole* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 306-7.

his bodily functions, the Captain arguing that he is perfectly able to resist his own sexual urges (H4:5), whereas the Doctor is able to choose voluntarily where and when he urinates (H4, 8). Poised in opposition to this are the scenes at the fairground (H2:3, H2:5, H1:1, H1:2 – all condensed into one scene in the recent Lehmann edition, into two in Berg's Landau edition), in which the fairground Showman displays his performing animals that have been taught human abilities, like the horse that can reason and the monkey that dresses like a soldier. Humans, just like these animals, are 'still a part of nature, pure unspoilt nature' and that man like them should, indeed can do no other than, 'be natural'.[110] By removing this satire that makes the position that man can do nothing to control his bestial urges seem ridiculous, and leaving instead only Woyzeck's own reasonable-sounding protestations in the scenes with the Doctor and the Captain, Berg dismantles the pro-civilization half of the argument, leaving the anti-rationality, anti-science half to triumph.

Although the extent to which man can override the fact that he is a manifestation of nature is left open, nature itself is figured by Büchner as intrinsically evil (or, at least, it includes the potential for evil within it). This contrasts with the Romantic view, in which contemplation of nature (or nature in art) offered the same exquisitely blissful and painful experience that communion with God offered the Old-Testament prophet or Medieval saint.[111] God was taken from his celestial realm and transferred into earthly nature (arguably first by Rousseau) and became accessible via art as the sublime. The organic unity of a spiritualized Nature was, for Büchner's predecessors like Kant and Goethe, a model that human life – particularly in its social organization – should aspire to emulate. Romantic art absorbed this *in toto*, and the sublime, felt by E.T.A. Hoffmann to reside in the tonal and motivic structure of music, i.e. in its autonomy rather than its surface emotional or referential content, became the defining quality of great art.[112] This autonomy meant that the artwork became an allegory of the universe; its motivic

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[110] 'Sehen Sie, das Vieh ist noch Natur, unverdorbe Natur! […] Mensch sei naturlich', Pörnbacher, Büchner, Werke, 238.

[111] In *Der goldne Topf* (1814), for example, Hoffmann combines all the elements that comprise the religion of romanticism – yearning, nature, supernature, the idea of a 'true self' in opposition to the role one must accept in society:

> 'He [Anselmus, a student] felt some unknown force stirring within him and causing that blissful pain, that yearning, which assures humanity of another and a higher existence. What pleased him most was to wander by himself through fields and forests, as though no longer tied to his impoverished life, and to behold the diverse images arising from the depths of his being, in which he seemed to recognize himself'.

E.T.A Hoffmann, *The Golden Pot and Other Stories*, trans. Ritchie Robertson (Oxford & New York: Oxford World's Classics, 1992), 21.

[112] Hoffmann's description of the experience of listening to a Beethoven symphony is very similar to Anselmus's experience of nature:

> '… Beethoven's instrumental music discloses to us the realm of the tragic and the illimitable. Glowing beams pierce the deep night of this realm and we are conscious of gigantic shadows which, alternately increasing and decreasing, close in on us nearer and nearer, destroying us but not destroying the pain of endless longing in which is engulfed and lost every passion aroused by the exulting sounds. And only through this very pain in which love, hope, and joy, consumed but not destroyed, burst forth from our hearts in the deep-voiced harmony of all the passions, do we go on living and become hypnotized seers of visions!'

and harmonic rules (what Adorno called its *formal law*) being homologous to the laws of nature. But, importantly, whereas scientific understanding of the absolute was connected with mercantilism – through its exploitation in new technologies; artistic visions of the absolute associated nature with an imaginative space outside the grubby reality of city life in which modes of non-rational human understanding not amenable to scientific enquiry could flourish.[113] Wagner absorbed both Hoffmann's writing on the metaphysical aspects of the Beethoven Symphony as well as Schopenhauer's aesthetics and, although he maintained a physicalist reading of both, he preserved the idea that there is a non-rational order that escapes ordinary language (or mathematical formulae) in nature that may be glimpsed through the emotional states that arise in art – especially those extreme states, like sexual or religious bliss, or insanity.[114] Thus, while Wagner, to be followed by Nietzsche in *BT*, did not believe that music gave visions of the transcendent reality of Nature – as Hoffmann seems to have done – they did, however, think it could give the auditor a close impression of the source of the unity of the universe, wherein lay its redemptive potential.[115] Given Berg's approval of the high-minded aims of Bayreuth, his willingness to side with Wagner against his greatest living 'hero' Kraus, and the influence on his musical style and outlook by Mahler, who absorbed the ideas through his association with the Pernerstorfer Circle, it is unsurprising that Berg removed many lines and passages that would disturb the Wagnerian view of Nature and its relation to art.[116]

In the scene with the Doctor, for example, he cut the words in square brackets: 'Herr Doktor, [haben Sie schon was von der doppelten Natur gesehen?] Wenn die Sonne im Mittag steht, und es ist,

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E. T. A. Hoffmann, ' "Beethoven's Instrumental Music": Translated from E. T. A. Hoffmann's *Kreisleriana* with an Introductory Note', trans. Arthur Ware Locke, *The Musical Quarterly*, 3(1) (Jan., 1917), 127.

[113] By the 'absolute', I mean Kant's *Unbedingte* – the unconditioned or final cause in the regressive cause-effect chain. Max Planck was typical of nineteenth-/early twentieth-century German physicists when he said that he 'had always looked upon the search for the absolute as the noblest and most worthwhile task in science'; Max Planck, *Wissenschaftliche Selbstbiographie*, ed. Wieland Berg (Halle; Deutsche Akademie der Naturforscher Leopoldina, 1990); trans. Frank Gaynor, in *Scientific Autobiography and Other Papers* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1949), 46. Dahlhaus shows that, although today we use the term 'absolute music' in Wagner's sense of autonomous art-music without referent or function, the term carried its metaphysical connotation right up to the twentieth century – even among arch-formalists like Hanslick; Carl Dahlhaus, *Die Idee der absoluten Musik* (Kassel: Bärenreiter-Verlag, 1978). Translated into English by Roger Lustig as *The Idea of Absolute Music* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago, 1989). One might say, in crude terms, that physicists and composers were engaged in two sides of the same project to advance understanding of the absolute – physicists objectively and composers subjectively. This is why objective representation in music – like the babbling brook in Beethoven's 'Pastoral', or operatic music in general – was frowned upon unless the superficial mimesis gave way to a deeper Truth.

[114] See Wagner, 'Zukunftsmusik' [1860], *Wagner's Prose Works*, Vol. III, trans. W. A. Ellis (1907), 317-318 for Wagner's physicalist rewriting of Hoffmann's Beethoven Review. Deathridge also suggests Hoffmann's opera *Undine* (1816) as a possible influence on *Tristan und Isolde* (1865): *Wagner*, 139.

[115] In (*BT*, 6), Nietzsche explains the mechanism through which this impression is achieved through the physical perceptual system. It is through the arrangement of rationally apprehensible 'images and concepts' that music '*appears* as Will' and, although he is quick to point out that it 'cannot possibly be *Will*', it thereby symbolizes 'the original contradiction and original pain at the heart of the primordial unity, and thus symbolizes a sphere which lies above and beyond all appearance'. Thus the Dionysian, or emotional, content of the music is no less symbolic – and consequently no less rational – than the Apollonian, or linguistic, content; it is simply that when the plenitude of possible meanings of a passage of music is juxtaposed with the specificity of the libretto it allows the auditor to *imagine* infinity.

[116] See McGrath, 'Chapter 5: The Metamusical Cosmos of Gustav Mahler', Dionysian Art, 120-62 for a discussion of how Mahler incorporated the ideas of the triumvirate Schoenberg-Wagner-Nietzsche into his 3rd Symphony.

als ging' die Welt in Feuer auf, hat schon eine fürchterliche Stimme zu mir geredet'.[117] Schopenhauer, following Kant, split nature into *Wesen* and *Schein*, appearance and essence, but essence, or the Will, was considered to be the source of unity; conflict only arose through the *principium individuationis* in the world of appearance.[118] Büchner's original line, which Franzos transcribed perfectly from H4, would have been troubling to Berg, since the nature that Woyzeck sees behind the appearance of the sun and sky is the source of the torment. That is, the essential true nature, which he is able to perceive due to his irrational state of mind, in *Woyzeck*-world is not the source of a redemptive unity but instead radically evil. For the same reason, Berg didn't include any of (H4:12), available in his Landau edition, where voices from the earth and from the wind, i.e. directly from nature, instruct him to kill Marie: 'stich die Zickwolfin tot'.[119] Berg has again silenced an important strand of Büchner's presentation: it is not because of acculturation or civilization that men kill their sexual partners for infidelity – although that may determine the manner in which they express linguistically (i.e. rationally justify) what they are doing – but because of violent impulses brought on by their bestial jealousy.[120]

The story the Grandmother tells is a synoptic account of what Büchner was saying about the failure of science in his tragic vision in the play as a whole. Gurlitt, in his version of *Wozzeck*, gave particular weight to this story – it occurs in the second longest of the 19 scenes, which is only one of five to employ the chorus – and left the scene with the Doctor out instead. Berg didn't do away with it altogether, he interpolated the beginning into III.i (taken from H4:16), Marie's bible scene, where it acts as a premonition of the child having to grow up as an orphan. The remainder, which he cut, contains the idea, antithetical to a neo-romantic Wagnerian, that science is itself a noble search for the truth about nature and yet the nature it reveals is alien and hostile.

As well as removing Büchner's anti-nature polemic, he also altered the play so that it might better carry the Christian/Wagnerian redemption he wanted to offer Wozzeck and Marie through the music. Büchner's attitude to religion in Woyzeck was ambivalent, and he dealt with it more subtly than the parodic civilization-animal dichotomy. It is still, nevertheless, a balancing act. On one hand, throughout the play the characters use 'God' and 'the devil' phatically, but the words can also be taken literally, as if God and the devil were an immanent part of the world. Religion, with its convenient splitting of actions into good and evil, then, becomes a way of relating to an incomprehensible and unfair world. Also, for both Marie and Woyzeck, religion seems to promise, but never deliver, existential comfort. On

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[117] Büchner, *Woyzeck*, ed. Franzos/Landau in , Wozzeck*: Berg*, ed. Nicholas John (London: John Calder, 1990) ,57-110; 73.
[118] In (*WWR* I, 68), Schopenhauer likens seeing through the *principium individuationis* to lifting the veil of Maya and seeing the true unity of existence.
[119] It is not clear what Büchner meant by 'Zwickwolfin' here, it is probably meant as a term of abuse rather than being Marie's surname. See footnote no. 67 in Georg Büchner, *Dantons Tod and Woyzeck*, ed. Margaret Jacobs (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996), 165.
[120] For a discussion of male violence towards sexual partners as an adaptive phenomenon see Margo Wilson & Martin Daly, 'An evolutionary psychological perspective on male sexual proprietariness and violence against wives', *Violence and Victims* 8: 271-294; reprinted in R.B. Ruback & N.A. Weiner, eds. *Interpersonal Violent Behaviors: Social and Cultural Aspects* (New York: Springer Publishing, 1995), 109-133.

the other hand, however, it provides Woyzeck with a language, even a justification, for his murderous act; and it causes Marie to feels shame and guilt for her sexual drives.[121] The Büchner play raises the life of the human being to the status of the mystery of God, as something that may be taken as the basis for faith. It also posits the unending search for truth of the empirical method as a continuing spiritual journey that might replace traditional notions of a fixed heaven. So Woyzeck and Marie's lives have intrinsic value as exemplars of human life itself and through their ingenuous searching after truth, not through their deaths, which are horrific and cruel. They are certainly not redemptive and, indeed, Büchner did everything to make sure they could not be seen as such. However, Berg – perhaps influenced by Wagner's Feuerbachian Christian universalism – attempted to redeem both Wozzeck and Marie's suffering. In the libretto he did this in two main ways.

Firstly, he diluted the violence. In the 'what nature tells me' scene that Berg left out, (H4:12) mentioned above, Woyzeck verbally imitates the thrusting of the knife as he ideationally murders Marie: 'stich, stich die Zickwolfin tot? stich, stich die Zickwolfin tot. […] stich tot, tot'. Büchner's murder scene, (H1:15), is much more disturbing than Berg's. Where Berg used the anodyne 'Ich nicht, Marie! Und kein Andrer auch nicht!' and then the stage instruction to plunge the knife into her throat, Büchner put 'Nimm das und das! Kannst du nicht sterbe. So! so! Ha sie zuckt noch, noch nicht noch nicht? Immer noch? (*stößt zu*) Bist du tot? Tot! Tot!' In this case, it was Franzos who wished to spare audiences the graphic images of a murder, transposed into the rhythmic thrusting of the language, that was – given Büchner's meticulous research into the circumstances of the case – much closer to the one that actually took place. Nevertheless, even if Berg had had access to Büchner's text here would he have used it? It is unlikely since it would have made the redemptive catharsis of the D minor interlude much more difficult to pull off: could an audience really forgive and feel sympathy for Woyzeck after witnessing such violence? Moreover, Berg's version has Wozzeck calmly, almost clinically, administering a death sentence, making it the result of a quasi-legal, almost rational process. In the Büchner this element is certainly present – with Woyzeck adopting the language of Christian law in order to justify his act – but the act itself is no solemn death sentence meted out by a distorted rationality, but an emotional, frenzied attack, accompanied by a great deal of pleasure from discharging his instinctual lust for revenge.

Secondly, he altered Marie's character. Susan Greene approves of the change: 'Berg, even more than Büchner, explores the psychological struggles of Wozzeck and his mistress with richness of insight and expression. Penetrating the inner nature of Marie, Berg transforms her from Büchner's virtual harlot into a less promiscuous woman of genuine conscience'. It is indeed probable that Berg shared Greene's Christian morality in which female promiscuity and harlotry were sinful. But he does

[121] This, of course, is one of Nietzsche's central criticisms of the Judeo-Christian religions: priests deaden suffering by creating an 'orgy of feeling', but one of the most effective ways of doing so is to make the individual believe that their suffering is their own fault – so, the comfort they seek for their sickness only makes them sicker (*GM* III, 17-19 and passim).

not turn Marie into a woman of conscience at all, in fact quite the opposite, he turns her into an anaemic, hypocritical Christian ideal type. Büchner's Marie, with her dark black curls, full red lips and sassy attitude is much more like an early incarnation of Carmen, and what Berg does in III.i (H4:16, with Berg's own interpolation of some of H4:17, as discussed above), the scene in which Marie reads from the Bible is as if Bizet had Carmen repent her wicked ways and ask for God's forgiveness before being stabbed by Don Jose.

He managed this with only very slight alterations to the text. (Although Franzos is, again, partly responsible here, the most important change was made by Berg.) Marie is reading from the bible, and Büchner quoted directly from 1 Peter 2:22, John 8:3, 8:11. The latter is the story of the Pharisees who bring an adulterous women to Jesus saying that by the law of Moses she should be stoned. Büchner's elliptical writing leaves out Jesus's most famous pronouncement, but does have 'So verdamme ich dich auch nicht, geh' hin, und sündige hinfort nicht mehr!'. Büchner has Marie then exclaim, with Berg's cut marked in square brackets: 'Herr Gott! [Herrgott! – ich kann nicht – Herrgott! gieb mir nur so viel, dass ich beten kann]'.[122] Büchner's Marie here refuses to partake in the hypocritical Christian cycle of sin – contrite confession – forgiveness – sin – etc. She cannot promise to 'go and sin no more' because she knows she will undoubtedly sin again. More than that, in asking for the strength to pray, she is admitting that she cannot even do that. This puts the last words of the scene, after she has read from Luke 7:38, where a sinful women washes Jesus's feet with her hair and tears, in a completely different light: 'Heiland! ich möchte Dir Füsse salben'. In the Berg version this sounds like a wish to atone for her sins, but in the Büchner, given what has gone before, the subjunctive 'möchte' is more likely to be heard as a 'would that I could atone for my sins' but, because she is honest about herself, she knows she cannot. Berg has thus removed her honesty and, *pace* Greene, her conscience. Büchner ended the scene there, but Berg added the line: 'Heiland, Du hast Dich ihrer erbarmt, erbarme Dich auch meiner! …', which has her complete the admission of guilt, contrition, atonement, request for forgiveness ritual. In the Büchner, she certainly feels guilty, but she stumbles at contrition and therefore neither atonement nor forgiveness are possible.

In a pre-echo of one of Nietzsche's central criticisms of Christianity, Marie is saying that her animal instincts and Christian morality are incompatible. Berg had the opportunity here to say something about the hypocrisy of German attitudes to sex at this time, as Wedekind had in *Frühlings Erwachen* (1881, first perf. 1906), in which a girl dies of a botched abortion, after her parents refused to 'enlighten' her (as it is expressed in German) about sexuality. The consequence of Berg's changes to the words is that when Wozzeck murders Marie, according to Christian doctrine, he is releasing her from suffering and allowing her to go to heaven. In Büchner's version, because she has failed to confess, to be contrite or to atone, Woyzeck sends her to hell for her adultery. If Berg had been true to the Büchner here,

[122] *Woyzeck*, ed. Landau, 100. Franzos's text differs only slightly from the modern critical edition.

it would have again made it much harder to forgive Woyzeck's murder and accept his own moment of redemption at the end of III.iv.

Berg the Redeemer

Berg solidified these various changes to the text through the music, particularly in the prominent parts of Act III: the opening scene with Marie reading from the bible, the D minor cathartic interlude between scenes iv and v, and the famous ending, which hints at the circular nature of the whole. The Bible Scene comprises a theme of seven bars, seven variations, each also of seven bars, and finishing with a double fugue, the first of which has a theme of seven notes. The theme itself is made up of a 4-bar fugal antecedent and a 3-bar consequent and has what Berg referred to as a 'dual' nature (redolent of the schizophrenic Florestan-Eusebius phrases in Schumann) that is preserved in most of the subsequent variations and the two halves of the double fugue.[123] Both sides are atonal, but closer inspection reveals how useless this word is in this context – rather like using the word 'chromatic' in relation to Strauss.[124] The antecedent is built up of tonal chains of notes, including perfect fourths, and ends on a bitonal superimposition of a D major chord on top of and E-flat major chord. The long notes, consonances and fugal texture suggest renaissance choral polyphony: this half of the theme is used when Marie reads from the bible. The consequent, with its dissonant minor seconds, semiquaver parallel major seconds, and disjunct bass that outlines all 12 notes, is used to represent her guilt and self-loathing. In the second half of the fugue, the guilt music is shown to give rise to her atonement and request for forgiveness.[125]

In his analysis of the scene, Allen Forte singles out Variation 5 for special consideration because it is one of the very few passages in the opera that has a key signature and is definitively in one key – here it has four flats and is in F minor.[126] While he is right about the significance of this passage, his own analysis expects the listener to be able to pick out no fewer than 31 different pitch class sets out of the triadic texture, each of which relates to an earlier event in the opera – all in 9 bars. What he misses out is any discussion of the *sonority* of this music, which is stands apart from the other variations.

Erika Reiman is more convincing here, arguing that that the tonal passages are expressions of 'unreality' thereby marking the characters' attempts to escape from the everyday.[127] Indeed, the nearly

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[123] Berg '[*Wozzeck*-Vortrage]', 322.

[124] Allen Forte divides the music in this scene into tonal (the fifth variation) and atonal (the rest) in 'Tonality, Symbol, and Structural Levels in Berg's *Wozzeck*', *The Musical Quarterly* 71(4) (1985), 474-499.

[125] Alain Fourchotte discusses how the duality in the music corresponds to Marie's conflicted emotional state, but that the two halves are tied together by Perle's 'The Child Rebuffed' motif in 'Les voix de la conscience et du sang dans la scène I de l'act III du *Wozzeck* d'Alan Berg' in *Nouvelles approaches del voix narrative*, ed. Marc Marti, Narratologie, vol. 5 (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2003), 53-78. The motif is Perle's *Leitmotiv* No. 16, heard initially in II.i and occurring in III.i in bars 19ff: George Perle, *The Operas of Alban Berg: Volume One/* Wozzeck (Berkeley: California UP, 1980), 112.

[126] Perle, *Wozzeck*.

[127] Erika Reiman, 'Tonality and Unreality in Berg's *Wozzeck'* in Siglind Bruhn (ed.), *Encrypted Messages in Alban Berg's Music* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1998), 229-42.

tonal antecedent and its variations, which are used for the biblical passages, are earthbound in comparison to Variation 5, which comes as a brief moment of transcendent solace in the midst of suffering. But what are the words here? It is the text Berg had deliberately imported from the next scene: 'Es war einmal ein armes Kind und hatt' keinen Vater und keine Mutter, war Alles tot […]'. The air of unreality is there partly to suggest the escape into fairy-tale land and it is also a premonition of what is to come, but the comforting calmness suggests that this is a desired outcome, that Marie wants to be dead, even if that would mean leaving her child alone.[128] Despite Berg's personal belief in Nietzschean life-affirmation, Marie seems to have succumbed to Schopenhauerian pessimism, in which the best thing is not to be born at all, and if one already has been born, then the second best thing is to die as quickly as possible.[129] Nevertheless, he still incorporates this into an overarching harmonicl framework that is itself redemptive.

Perle argues that '[it] was the nature of the composer rather than the nature of his subject that led Berg to impose order and discipline through the rigorous formal framework that governs the work as a whole and upon which the significance of the smallest structural detail depends'. That is, it was a question of personality that ensured the difference between Berg's integrated setting of *Wozzeck* and Gurlitt's fragmented account, free of binding interludes, and more in keeping with the Büchner.[130] Dietmar Holland probably has the stronger case, arguing that Berg was developing the principles laid down by Wagner in the essay 'On the Application of Music to the Drama' in inventing autonomous musical structures for scenes, acts and even across the whole opera.[131] Wagner was himself supplying the next turn of the dialectic screw by incorporating the organic form of the Beethoven symphony – with all the metaphysical connotations of its status as *absolute* music – into opera. Martin Friedland argued, shortly after the premiere, that Berg had gone one further than Wagner in creating a new type of *Gesamtkunstwerk* in which music can no longer exist independently of the drama.[132] The opera as a whole is in a kind of A-B-A form, where two more loosely grouped scenes in Acts I and III surround the tightly organized Act II which, as Adorno points out, is a fully worked out symphony 'with all the tension and the closure of that form'.[133]

I would argue, however, that Act III – an apparently diverse group five of inventions, each based on a different type of ostinato – is just as integrated as Act II, and that the manner of its integration is intimately linked to Berg's redemptive scheme. The *b* that sounds throughout the murder scene

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[128] Reiman reads this differently, arguing that Marie breaks of the story just when she believes it is coming true, when she realizes that the child will indeed be left alone: 'Tonality and Unreality', 232.
[129] Wagner is 'much more modern than Schopenhauer, because, like Ibsen and Nietzsche, he "says yes to life" '.: Berg to Helene, 30 July 1908, *Letters to his Wife*, 37-8.
[130] George Perle, *The Operas of Alban Berg:* Wozzeck (Berkley: California UP, 1980), 36-7.
[131] Dietmar Holland, ' "Linienkreise – Figuren – Wer das lessen könnte!": Zur Funktion der Musik im *Wozzeck'* in *Wozzeck*-Programmheft der Bayerischen Staatsoper, (1982); reprinted in Csampai and Holland, 252-59.
[132] Martin Friedland, 'Zur Aesthetik des *Wozzeck*', *Allgemeine Musikzeitung* 53 (1926), 61-3.
[133] Berg said in his 1929 lecture that ternary form was his guiding structural principle in the composition of *Wozzeck*. Adorno, *Alban Berg*, 87.

III.ii – an 'invention on one note' – represents, amongst other things, Wozzeck's obsession with the knife and what he's going to do with it. Josef-Horst Lederer, after discussing the history of grotesquery associated with B, and B minor in particular, argues that the resolution of the *b* onto a *c* at the end of the scene – in fact a distorted C major, indicates Marie's release from her wretched life.[134]

Allen Forte describes the D minor tonality of the interlude as 'arbitrary', only displaying a 'tonal patina', and attempts to show that it is better thought of as atonal and in terms of pitch class sets.[135] But to my ears it seems to prove the opposite, that sometimes apparently atonal elements have tonal function. For instance, the conglomeration of all 12 notes that occurs in bar 364 sounds like a dominant to the following D minor chord with added second.[136] Because of the bass tritone substitution from *e*-flat onto the dominant *a* and because of the voice leading in the upper parts, this passage, and the epilogue as a whole feels like a tonic resolution with all the emotional associations that carries. And, just as the resolution of the b onto c between III.ii and III.iii marked Marie's release, so the epilogue marks Wozzeck's. More than this, however, both are incorporated within a larger tonal matrix, which allows the whole to be felt as resolution and release. Across the act, distorted versions of the following tonalities can be heard:

> i: G (The consequent of the theme begins on g and comes to rest on a superimposition of a D major chord and an E-flat major chord – thus sounding the dominant and relative major simultaneously.)
> ii: B (The note *b* is present throughout the scene.)
> iii: C (The scene starts in a warped C major – using an augmented triad on C on an out-of-tune pub piano.)
> iv: B-flat → A (The B-flat is occurs throughout as an important bass note, serving the function of an augmented 6th chord on the flattened submediant in the following key of D minor. The whole scene is therefore a prolonged substitution for iib in a standard iib → V^7 → i progression.)
> Epilogue: D (The D minor is not only a resolution, but it is also an altered dominant for the G – centred tonality with which the act ends.)
> v: G (Comes to rest on the home chord, which is effectively a G major chord with added notes – all the acts begin and end with notes taken from this chord. The prominent *g*s and *d*s mean the act has returned to the *g* and *d* with which it started.)

Even if one could prove theoretically that the whole act were atonal, as Forte was intent on doing, the European ear, so used to tonal harmony, cannot help but hear the act in terms of the tension and release of traditional tonality, even if it is as contorted and degraded as its realization is here. The final thing to note is that, at the very end of the opera, the music is simultaneously brought to a close with

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[134] Josef-Horst Lederer, 'Zu Alban Bergs Invention über den Ton H' in *50 Jahre* Wozzeck, 57-67.
[135] Allan Forte, 'The Mask of Tonality: Alban Berg's Symphonic Epilogue to *Wozzeck'* in *Alban Berg: Historical and Analytical Perspectives*, ed. David Gable and Robert P. Morgan (Oxford: Clarendon, 1991), 151-200; 199-200. Forte attempts to undermine the reader's faith in the theoretical veracity of Berg's discussions about tonality and atonality. As the Pfitzner essay – discussed in the next chapter – demonstrates, while Berg's theoretical writing may not be freighted with the sort of technical apparatus that Forte brings to bear, it is always insightful.
[136] '[*Wozzeck* Vortrage]', Redlich, 327.

the *g-d* perfect fifth in the strings and harps and an expressive swell and left open with flat dynamics and no ritardando in the alternating figure in the winds,. The non-ending and circularity implied by the winds tells the listener that the whole sorry cycle of suffering and death is going to continue with the child. But because the harmonic scheme that has got us here incorporates this moment into the large-scale structure of the act, it means that it is felt as resignation – Adorno glosses it as 'let it be' – and so it becomes a moment of release for the audience.

Opinion on the D minor interlude is split between those, like Constantin Floros, who see it as evidence of the social commitment of the work and those, like Joseph Kerman, who view it as a fake catharsis imposed by the composer.[137] In (*GM* III, 17), Nietzsche argues that one of the defining characteristics of the 'pessimistic religions' (by which he means the big three) is their emphasis on redemption which, being defined as 'the hypnotic sense of nothingness, the repose of deepest sleep, in short absence of suffering', says a resounding 'no' to life.[138] Although Nietzsche was nominally attacking the priests in these passages (*GM* III, 17-19), it is apparent that he was also thinking of Wagner. Reading Berg's treatment of the material in Act III in these terms, he seems to have combined Wagner's redemptive no-saying and his romantic utopianism with a misreading of Büchner's fatalism. Büchner's fatalism is less like Berg's 'let it be', and more like Nietzsche's struggle to incorporate suffering, decay and disease into an affirmative view of existence.

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Running counter to this dominant sense of impotent resignation, though, there is also another, more engaged, even optimistic, *Wozzeck* that achieves something of Büchner's original project to mediate between enlightenment rationality and spirituality/mythology. It is the task of the final two chapters of Part I to try and uncover this.

[137] Constantin Floros, 'Alban Bergs *Wozzeck* als Botschaft an die Menschheit' in *Der kulturpädagogische Auftrag der Musik im 20. Jahrhundert: Bericht ücher das Symposion vom 14.-15. Juli 1989 in der Hochschule für Musik München*, ed. Ute Jung-Kaiser, Musik im Diskurs, vol. 9 (Regensburg: Gustav Bosse Verlag, 1991), 25-42. Joseph Kerman, '*Wozzeck* and *The Rake's Progress*', *Opera as Drama*, (Knopf; 1956), 232.

[138] 'das hypnotische Nichts-Gefühl, die Ruhe des tiefsten Schlafes, Leidlosigkeit kurzum'. English translation: Kaufmann (ed. & trans.), *Basic Writings of Nietzsche* (New York: Random House, 2000), 570.

The 'Mathematical'

According to a myth repeated in various guises for at least the last 2000 years, the 5th-century mathematician Hippasus was taken to sea and drowned for spreading knowledge about irrational numbers.[1] His fellow Pythagoreans believed that the harmony of nature was determined by the natural numbers, $\mathbb{N} = \{1, 2, 3, ...\}$, and since the irrationals, e.g. $\sqrt{2}$, $\sqrt{3}$, $\sqrt{5}$, cannot be expressed as the ratio of two such numbers they were considered impious.[2] The myth has endured because it illustrates something universal about human behaviour. Precisely what that something is, though, tends to shift according to the particular views of the author citing it. Oswald Spengler used it in *The Decline of the West*, Vol. I (*Der Untergang des Abendlandes*, 1918, rev. 1922) to support one of the central planks of his argument. Anyone who knows the book by reputation but has never picked it up might be surprised that the first chapter is devoted to the subject of mathematics. It occupies this leading position for a good reason: if he could show that mathematical knowledge was the product of culture, then the same would certainly be true of all other, less secure, branches of learning. He introduced the Hippasus myth at the beginning of this chapter because it illustrated: firstly, that mathematicians themselves disagreed about

[1] The story is an amalgamation of reports by later Greek and Roman scholars, Plutarch, Iamblichus, Pappus, Proclus writing between five and nine centuries after the event. For an overview, including informed speculation on the possible veracity of the stories and their meaning, see Carl Huffman, "Pythagoreanism", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Summer 2010 Edition)*, Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2010/entries/pythagoreanism/>.

[2] Iamblichus (c.245 – c.345) uses the word 'impiety' in *On the Pythagorean Way of Life*, trans. Gillian Clark (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1989), 39. The term 'natural number' was first used by Nicolas Chuquet in *Triparty en la science des nombres* (1484) to distinguish them from what he saw as artificial (i.e. man-made) numbers like fractions, irrationals or negatives. For the Greeks, the naturals were the only numbers and did not need to be distinguished as such.

what counts as truth; and secondly, how fundamentally different 'Classical' and 'Western' conceptions of mathematics are.[3]

Spengler's work on *Decline* overlaps with Berg's on *Wozzeck* and, although there is no question of influence, Berg had absorbed a similar manner of thinking from contemporaries, like Kraus and Schoenberg, that might be broadly characterized as *irrationalism* or *reactionary modernism*.[4] Within this cluster of ideas, Enlightenment rationality, and particularly science, was felt to be causing the disintegration of – using Spengler's terminology – a strong German *culture* into a weaker *civilization*.[5] However, Berg's letters reveal that his attitude to numbers was quite different from Spengler's. He subscribed to a type of scientific realism, believing that numbers and numerical patterns shaped the world in a fixed and predictable way. While the proximate source was the occult and what would now be thought of as pseudo-science, it still raises the question of why Berg's ideas are more easily identified with the mathematical turn evident in the physics of the time than the irrationalist conception of mathematics to be found in Spengler, which seem to conform more to his political outlook. While there is nothing unusual in artists holding mutually contradictory opinions, an answer would be useful interpretatively, given Berg's incorporation of such numerical patterns in his work. Previous commentators who have dealt with these issues have tended to stop after uncovering the semiotics of the numbers and patterns involved. This chapter, by contrast, employs Heidegger's notion of *the mathematical* – a clear-sighted reformulation of the worries evident in Spengler's critique, made with a full understanding of recent breakthroughs in mathematics – as a critical tool to understand the perceptual world enacted by *Wozzeck* in performance.

THE NUMBERS GAME

Berg's attitude to the use of number in his own compositions is baffling. He often leavened his commentary on his numerical riddles with self-deprecating humour. In an open letter about the Chamber Concerto (1925), where he linked all structural aspects of the work to the number 3, he joked: 'I'm sure that – to the extent that I make this public knowledge – my reputation as mathematician will rise in squared proportion to the demise of my reputation as a composer'.[6] And he was keen to stress, in this letter and in the later 1929 lecture on *Wozzeck*, that although his focus was on mathematical and struc-

[3] In Spengler's view, the Greeks were, unlike the West, adverse to any notion of far distance and hence notions of infinity were anathema. 'Classical' and 'Western' are two of Spengler's 'high cultures'.

[4] Jeffrey Herf, *Reactionary Modernism: Technology, Culture and Politics in Weimar and the Third Reich* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984). This terminology is confusing because, although politically right wing, many in this group would have considered themselves progressive.

[5] The dichotomy pre-modern/irrational-good versus modern/rational-bad was a preoccupation of many of the influential social theorists of the time, such as Ferdinand Tönnies and George Simmel: see the introductory chapter for further discussion.

[6] Berg to Schoenberg, 9 February 1925, *The Berg-Schoenberg Correspondence: Selected Letters*, Ed. Juliane Brand et al (London & New York: Norton, 1987), 334-7. The letter was published in the February 1925 issue of *Pult und Taktstock*.

tural aspects, these were of no importance next to the 'inner process' of the music.[7] If this were really the case, then why spend so much drawing everyone's attention to them?

The problem of mathematical structure versus inner process is perhaps best illustrated in Act I, Scene iv of *Wozzeck*, the focus of this chapter. Set in the Doctor's surgery, Wozzeck is treated as nothing better than a laboratory animal, forced onto various diets to prove the Doctor's spurious 'theory'. The whole scene is directed towards a stomach-churning climax, in which the Doctor ecstatically anticipates the fame this theory will bring him. 21 repetitions of a 12-note 'Passacaglia-Thema' (as it is labelled in the score) then 'represent', according to Berg, 'the Doctor's obsessional *idée fixe*' which is 'also echoed in the words of Wozzeck, the tortured victim of the Doctor's obsession'.[8] Berg notes that, although the theme is clear in the cello line accompanying the Doctor at the very start of the scene and then 'returns with emphasized distinctness' in the last variation, it is 'partially concealed throughout the development of the Passacaglia'. Listeners were not only being told to ignore the mathematical structure, but that they couldn't even hear it if they wanted to.

Most commentary on I.iv – one of the most analysed scenes in the opera – follow Berg's lead and elaborate on how this inaudible structure relates to the dramatic action.[9] As for the number question, there have been two major approaches. One of these is Allen Forte's mathematics-inspired pitch-class set theory, which he, and notably his student Janet Schmalfeldt, applied to *Wozzeck* to yield some impressive-looking analysis.[10] This does not concern the strict mathematical patterning itself, but instead tries to show that there is an even more sophisticated mathematics going on at a deeper level. However, the consensus opinion is that any insight it yields is dwarfed by the amount of effort needed to do it in the first place, or to understand it thereafter.[11] Nevertheless, one wonders what it is about the score or the music that led them to employ such recondite methods.

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[7] Alban Berg, 'Berg's Lecture on *Wozzeck*' in H. F. Redlich, *Alban Berg: The Man and His Music* (London: John Calder, 1957), 261-285.

[8] 'Berg's Lecture on *Wozzeck'*, 273.

[9] The industry bible is George Perle, *The Operas of Alban Berg: Volume One/*Wozzeck (Berkeley: California University Press, 1980). Papers on the passacaglia include the following. Letizia Spampinato, 'Considerazioni analitiche sulla Passacaglia del *Wozzeck* di Alban Berg' in Adriana Licciardello and Graziella Seminara (eds.), *Wozzeck: Atti del convegno 'Il Wozzeck di Alban Berg'* (Lucca: Liberia Musicale Italiana, 1999), 41-54. Zoltán Cserépy, 'Zür visionären Klangwelt der Passacaglia in Alban Bergs *Wozzeck'*, *Schweizer Jahrbuch für Musikwissenschaft*, new series 8-9 (1988-89), 81-93. Klaus Velten, 'Wozzeck und der Doktor: Ein Beitrag zur Deutung der Szene I, 4 aus Alban Bergs Oper', *Musik und Bildung* 17 (1985), 164-67. Günther Antesberger, 'Die Passacaglia in der Wiener Schule: Analytische Studien zu einem barocken Formtypus in Werken von Arnold Schönberg, Alban Berg und Anton Webern' in *Festschrift für Franz Koschier: Beiträge zur Volkskunde, Naturkunde und Kulturgeschichte*, Kärtner Museumsschriften, vol. 57 (Klagenfurt: Verlag des Landes museums für Kärnten, 1974), 121-38. Erich Forneberg, 'Alban Bergs Passacaglia aus der Oper *Wozzeck'*, *Musik im Unterricht* 53 (1962), 100-3. Also of interest in this context is Leon Stein, 'The Passacaglia in the Twentieth Century', *Music & Letters* 40(2) (Apr., 1959), 150-153.

[10] Janet Schmalfeldt, *Berg's* Wozzeck*: Harmonic Language and Dramatic Design* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1983).

[11] Anthony Pople said that 'watching Forte play off one of his analytical techniques against the other' was 'like watching a computer lose to itself at chess': 'Secret Programmes: Themes and Techniques in Recent Berg Scholarship', *Music Analysis*, 12(3) (1993), 381-99; 396. Two contemporary reviewers of Schmalfeld's attempt to 'explain the pitch structure of the entire opera in terms of a single comprehensive system' pointed out that the choice of pitch class sets were often 'inconsistent' or 'arbitrary', and passages that did not fit the comprehensive system were 'ignored'. They also questioned whether

The second is the equally mathematical-sounding cryptography, in which the numerical or other patterns were deciphered for their biographical (which in Berg's case often meant an extra-marital affair), textural, or cultural significance.[12] One of its practitioners noted that, unlike the 'symbolic arithmology' of medieval and renaissance works or the masonic references in *Die Zauberflöte* that would have been understood by the cognoscenti, the 'numbers in Berg's music […] have no such generally understood significance'. Whatever 'Berg's numbers symbolize, it is something purely personal; and even when the private significance of a number is known, Berg's reasons for choosing that number often remain obscure'.[13] For many analysts, the question was then, well why bother finding out? Claudio Spies's response was typical: '[It] is ... the *music* Berg composed that should command an ever increasing interest and admiration, rather than the beguiling but trivial rattle of *"secret"* programmes or the itchy sensationalism of disclosures in a life no longer private'. Spies was keen to get back to 'the notes' and not just the 'taxonomy of constructive means' but into discovering the 'continuity and syntax' in Berg's music – 'how [it] *goes*, and how [it] was *composed*'.[14] This is certainly a worthwhile task, and necessary for any real understanding of the opera, but there is still good reason for regarding the numbers question as unfinished business. While Jarman and Spies are right that the referents of any particular numbers is personal, and that they have little to do with the music, they do – along with other types of patterning in the score – contribute to a certain quality that I call its *mathematicity*. The analytic approach that Spies advocates does not address how the score's mathematicity affects the auditor's perception of the multi-media artwork *Wozzeck* in performance.

Previous readings of *Wozzeck*, whether semiotic or analytic, have paid scant attention to how Berg's score interacts with its literary predecessor. Berg's conspicuous use of mathematics in a play by a scientist about science plugs the work in to a whole constellation of ideas about truth and the limits of scientific knowledge. However, getting at this poses a number of peculiar challenges to the would-be interpreter. The play (which to complicate matters is only a fragment) and music are separated by 80 years and so drawing up a parallel between Büchner's concerns and Berg's is already difficult. Further, Büchner was a trained scientist who had a firm grasp of the philosophical issues at stake. Berg might have been well-read in philosophy and literature, but his ingenuous acceptance of explanations offered by pseudo-science and the occult betray an enthusiastic dabbler rather than someone who had come

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the relationship between complementary sets – the essential component of Schmalfeldt's analysis – is even 'audible'. Set theory still might have had something to say about the process of composition, but the same reviewers show that when the errors in Schmalfeldt's own statistical analysis are corrected, her 'comprehensive system' was little better than chance at explaining Berg's decisions about pitch. Douglass Green, Stefan Kostka, '[Review of Janet Schmalfeldt, *Berg's* Wozzeck]', *Journal of Music Theory*, 29(1) (Spring, 1985), 177-86.

[12] See for example, Siglind Bruhn (ed.), *Encrypted Messages in Alban Berg's Music*, (New York: Garland Publishing, 1998), 5-29.

[13] Douglas Jarman, 'Alban Berg, Wilhelm Fliess and the Secret Programme of the Violin Concerto', *The Musical Times*, 124(1682) (Apr., 1983), 218-223; 218.

[14] Claudio Spies, 'Some Notes on the Completion of Lulu', *Alban Berg: Historical and Analytical Perspectives*, eds. David Gable and Robert P. Morgan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 215-34. The recent publication of Patricia Hall's detailed study of the *Wozzeck* sketches will surely be of great value in helping analysts with the 'how it was composed' part of the question. Patricia Hall, *Berg's* Wozzeck (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

to grips with the latest developments and their epistemological and ontological corollaries. Therefore, any attempt to consider *Wozzeck* as an intervention in the on-going debate about science and society that originally fired Büchner needs to find a way of reaching out beyond Berg's immediate influences towards the wider scientific and mathematical context.

It is my contention that *Wozzeck* – perhaps independently of Berg's conscious intentions – articulates a critique of rationality more sophisticated than that of Spengler or the irrationalists, a critique that was already evident in the Büchner, developed in Nietzsche's later work, and given full articulation in Heidegger's contemporaneous concept of 'the mathematical'. The modern mind is fundamentally mathematical, according to Heidegger, confusing the phenomenological reality of a situation with the essence abstracted by the scientific method, an essence whose truth is guaranteed axiomatically by the human mind.[15] A performance of the opera recreates a defamiliarized version of this 'mathematical' perception of the world in a way it that involves the surface mathematical patterning, the illusion of mathematical depth, and 'how the music goes'.[16]

THE MATHEMATICAL TURN

Musicians are much more likely to be familiar with the myth of Pythagoras than that of Hippasus. It too has been endlessly retold to suit the prevailing prejudices but, according to Kitty Ferguson, it does contain a 'tiny core of truth'. While plucking a lyre Pythagoras discovered that harmonious intervals were produced by whole-number ratios between the string lengths.[17] 'Tradition has it' that he and his followers then 'literally and figuratively, fell to their knees upon discovering that the universe is rational'.[18] Mathematics had been around for thousands of years by this time, and it was not just valued for its commercial, civil engineering or military use, but also pursued for its own sake. However, this ability to reveal fundamental truths about the natural phenomena was new.[19] The idea that since Hippasus found the flaw in the perfect Pythagorean system, science then progressed linearly until today has rightly been discredited. It is also becoming increasingly accepted that any form of history based on discrete knowledge regimes punctuated by violent ruptures is an over-reaction in the opposite direction:

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[15] Martin Heidegger, *Die Frage nach dem Ding* [Winter semester, 1935/6], (Tübingen: Max Niemayer Verlag, 1962), 50-83. Printed in translation as 'Modern Science, Metaphysics and Mathematics' in Basic Writings, ed. David Farrell Krell (London: Routledge, 1993), 271-305; hereafter referred to as MMM. Heidegger had a full understanding of the current state of mathematics and physics and this lecture sets out a clear theorization of scientific theorization. My approach in this chapter is also indebted to the approach to mathematical history given in Alain Badiou, *Being and Event* [*L'Être et l'Événement*, 1988] (London: Continuum, 2005); hereafter referred to as *EEE*.

[16] Mirroring developments in literary criticism, there has recently been a turn away from semiotic towards affective reading in music theory and criticism. The aim here is to do something similar with what Deleuze and Guattari call 'percept', the other factor in the 'compound of sensations' that differentiates art from other modes of discourse: Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *What is Philosophy?* [*Qu'est-ce que la philosophie?*, 1991], trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchell, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 164.

[17] It may have been a blacksmith's hammer on an anvil. Kitty Ferguson, *Pythagoras: His Lives and the Legacy of a Rational Universe* (Cambridge: Icon Books, 2011), 4-5.

[18] Ferguson, *Pythagoras*, 6.

[19] Ferguson, *Pythagoras*, 7.

there are invariably continuities over any paradigm shift/epistemic break.[20] The challenge for any historian who deals with physics or mathematics is to separate an idea's *genesis*, its emergence at a specific historical site, from its *structure*, which requires the recognition of site transcendent truth. This is not to say that the human mind ever has access to absolute truth, only that the truth may be glimpsed in certain aporie and antinomies. Neither is it to propose that there is any *telos* to scientific enquiry, only that some ideas are so disorienting or disconcerting that they compel those that follow to pursue the truth they point towards. The story of Hippasus's drowning gained widespread currency down the centuries precisely because the breach the irrationals opened up between geometry and arithmetic caused such conceptual difficulties for scientists that it could not be ignored, regardless of historical circumstances.[21]

For the historian who situates truth claims within localized linguistic (discursive) formations, it is difficult to analyse *Wozzeck* as a coherent artefact. If it is admitted that there is also a mathematical dimension to history through which truth claims both transcend but also demand the attention of those within each locality, the opera becomes a fascinating dialogue between two contingent responses to the Galilean event.[22] This is because, although there was little fundamental difference between the scientific methodology used by Büchner and contemporaries of Berg, there had been a number of disorienting mathematical developments that occurred between the composition of the two texts that offered retrospective clarity on the original constellation of ruptures that comprised the Scientific Revolution.[23] If the goal of this chapter is to demonstrate a homology between the aesthetic topologies of *Wozzeck* and Heidegger's theorization of mathematical science, then the purpose of this section is to contextualize Berg and Büchner's contributions in terms of the shift in the mathematical situation through the nineteenth century that made this theorization possible.

The Unreasonable Effectiveness of Mathematics

Although the meaning of particular numbers in Berg scores is of only passing interest, the curious cocktail of pseudo-science and number mysticism that comprised Berg's worldview and compelled him to infuse his scores with arithmetical games cannot simply be dismissed as some desperate need for spirituality. The reason the occult, alchemy, and theosophy were in vogue across Europe at this time was

[20] For a piece by piece destruction of Foucault's genealogy (that takes Bachelard and Kuhn with it) see J. G. Merquior, *Foucault* (London: Fontana, 1985), especially Chapter 5, 56-75. Any purchase Foucault may have in the human sciences, which itself is dubious, is lost altogether in the physical sciences.

[21] Needless to say, this is the tendentious view – borrowed from Badiou – that this author is using the universality of the Hippasus myth to support.

[22] Galileo's epithet 'father of science' does not do justice to the complexity of his place in the Scientific Revolution (a contested term in itself), but his work does channel all the most important currents that have come to be known as the Scientific Revolution and has been a convenient name to attach to a certain rupture in the history of Western thought.

[23] The whole point of Heidegger's essay is to show that nothing essential had changed in the way science and mathematics was carried out since Galileo. I am arguing that the mathematical catastrophes of the mid to late nineteenth century allowed Heidegger to make retrospective sense of the earlier Galilean event. '[A] site is only "evental" insofar as it is retroactively qualified as such by the occurrence of [a later] event': *EEE*, 179.

that they allowed the non-scientist intellectual a way of coming to terms with the ontological and epistemological consequences of contemporaneous scientific developments.[24] It is possible to make the case that Berg's quasi-scientific or mystical beliefs are actually degraded correlates of specific scientific or mathematical discoveries or catastrophies.

Berg's attitude to numbers is best illustrated by an exchange of letters with Schoenberg. He not only relished in simple arithmetical games that linked times, dates, tram numbers, etc. with his own auspicious number, but also ascribed mystical significance to the connections. In response to Schoenberg's suggestion that he might be reading too much into all these 23s, Berg supplied lengthy quotations and tables from Wilhelm Fleiss's *On Life and Death* (*Vom Leben und Tod*, 1906) in which Fleiss argued that life was periodic, and that the periods were always divisible by 23 and 28. The flaws in Berg's logic are obvious and faintly comical, but Fleiss was a genuine scientist his ideas have survived in what are now called circadian rhythms and cannot be dismissed out of hand – as Jarman has tried to do. Instead, Berg's acceptance that his life, and the world, was governed at a deeper level by numbers ought to be seen as the way in which he assimilated what is generally regarded by science historians as mathematical turn in physics.

There were a number of widely publicized breakthroughs around the time that Berg was composing *Wozzeck* which were achieved with pencil and paper at a desk, and then only later discovered to be true through observation. Many historians of science consider Maxwell's Equations (1860-65) to mark the beginning of shift from a mechanical to a mathematical conception of nature that was completed with relativity and quantum physics.[25] Newton's most quoted saying is 'I make no hypotheses', by which he meant his familiar equations, such as $F = ma$, or $F = Gm_1m_2/r^2$, were formulated after observing objects interacting in the real world (the Baconian method). All the quantities that are related by these equations, were mechanical quantities that could be measured. Maxwell's Equations, by contrast, not only had the predictive power of Newton's theory of gravity (through which we know where Pluto is going to be 200 years from now, for example), but they also posited physical entities that had not previously been observed. When Heinrich Hertz finally verified Maxwell's theory by generating the hypothesized electromagnetic waves in the laboratory (1886-7), he was demonstrating that an aesthetic sense for the beauty of a mathematical theory could reveal deep truths about the universe.[26] The

[24] This view of occultism as a way of absorbing new ideas, rather than just an inexplicable fad, has emerged in recent research: Corinna Treitel, *A Science for the Soul: Occultism and the Genesis of the Modern German* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004). For Badiou, the event – such as the breakthroughs/catastrophes discussed here – is so powerful that it exerts an influence even on those not directly connected with it. What I am proposing here is a mechanism for how this has happened in the case of Berg and Schoenberg.

[25] Michael Polanyi, an Austro-Hungarian contemporary of Berg, wrote: 'the predominant principle that shaped modern physical theory was […] the transition from a mechanical conception of reality to a mathematical conception of it'; '[the] modern [quantum and relativistic] revolution differed from its precursor [the Copernican] only in establishing mathematical harmonies in place of beautiful mechanical systems': 'Science and Reality', *The British Journal for the Philosophy of Science*, 18(3) (Nov., 1967), 177-196; 194.

[26] William R. Everdell, *The First Moderns: Profiles in the Origins of Twentieth-Century Thought* (University of Chicago Press: Chicago, 1997), 170. The recent discovery of the Higgs Boson is a similar victory for this type of reasoning: the particle was

nature of this truth, however, was purely mathematical. At the time Maxwell published, there were two competing theories of electrodynamics: distance theory and field theory. He showed that both theories were empirically equivalent and thus independent of any linguistic construct that might have provided a foundational structure. [27] Hertz's pronouncement that 'Maxwell's theory is Maxwell's system of equations' serves to illustrate German physicists' belief that ordinary descriptive language was only arbitrary metaphysical speculation, whereas mathematics spoke of the absolute.[28]

The quasi-divine ability of mathematics to reveal the deep structure of the universe bred what one commentator has called the 'cockiest generation of scientists that has ever lived', but alongside these achievements occurred a series of mathematical 'calamities'.[29] The first was the discovery of non-Euclidean geometry. Kant had thought that the mind imposed Euclidean geometry on sensory information through the transcendental deduction, but mathematicians had never been so certain. Starting with Gauss in the 1820s, and disseminated into the wider culture by Hermann von Helmoltz in the 1870s, mathematicians invented geometries that, for example, didn't include the parallel postulate (parallel lines never meet), or were not confined to three dimensions. This multiplication of geometries showed that the agreement of Euclidean geometry (and thus of mathematics in general) with ordinary experience is only an empirical not an *a priori* result. Contrary to what those basking in the reflected glory of Maxwell's electromagnetism believed, mathematics could never provide guaranteed knowledge of the absolute.

Unlike the mathematical turn in physics, which only provided the cultural backwash for Berg's scientific convictions, there is a traceable connection between Helmholtz's influential series of papers on non-Euclidean geometry and Schoenberg's expressionist techniques. The key figure here was the *bona fide* physics professor Johann Karl Friedrich Zöllner, whose occult experimentation fellow *Blaue Reiter* theorist Kandinsky 'resurrected' and cannibalized for its aesthetic potential.[30] Zöllner's most famous experiment saw the medium 'Dr' Henry Slade able to untie knots when the two ends of a piece of string were fixed. The only possibility, concluded Zöllner, was that Slade was using the 'fourth-

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hypothesized purely to make the theory work. Nineteenth-century German physicists, as versed in the Kantian critique as their artistic counterparts, saw it as their job to reveal the truth about the absolute.

[27] Edward Mackinnon, *Interpreting Physics: Language and the Classical/Quantum Divide* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2012), 215.

[28] Or, in expanded form: 'What is Maxwell's theory? I know of no shorter or more definite answer than the following: Maxwell's theory is Maxwell's system of equations': Heinrich Hertz, *Electric Waves* [1892] (New York: Dover Reprints, 1962), 20. Brought up in the same Kantian tradition, German scientists were just as keen as artists to claim that their work provided the most transparent window onto the absolute. Max Planck was typical, 'I had always looked upon the search for the absolute as the noblest and most worthwhile task of science': Max Planck, *Wissenschaftliche Selbstbiographie*, ed. Wieland Berg (Halle: Deutsche Akademie der Naturforscher Leopoldina, 1990); trans. Frank Gaynor, in *Scientific Autobiography and Other Papers* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1949), 46. The inability of language to speak of the highest truth that humans have access to is one of the sources of the Viennese *Sprachkrise* and the split between analytic and so-called 'continental' philosophy.

[29] Morris Kline, *Mathematics in Western Culture* [1953] (Harmondsworth: Peregrine, 1987), 362; and *Mathematics: The Loss of Certainty* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 4. There were also a number of tragedies – as Kline also refers to them – in physics, notably, Maxwell and Boltzmann's statistical mechanics which frustrated the German's Kantian vision of science by not giving absolute values to calculations but only approximate ones.

[30] Treitel, *Science for the Soul*, 17.

dimension'.[31] The ability of certain gifted individuals to reach outside of ordinary space and touch the noumenal – the true universe cut off from human experience according to Kant's idealism – was instrumental in forming Kandinsky's notion of the *unlogical*, a concept borrowed by Schoenberg to explain his own ability to channel nature through his music. Again, although Zöllner, and hence Kandinsky, had misunderstood much of Helmholtz's argument (Schoenberg himself only references the fourth-dimension obliquely), techniques like anti-parallelism translated the anti-idealism of non-Euclidean geometry into aesthetic experience. Helmholtz argued that Euclidean space was not a transcendental category, but the result of the mind coming into contact with a three-dimensional world. This did not imply that a fourth spatial dimension existed and, even if it did, it would not allow access to the Kantian noumenal (or 'nature' in Schoenberg's writing). Nevertheless, the sort of non-parallelism evident in the opening of the String Quartet op. 7 – discussed by Berg in the essay 'Why is Schoenberg's Music so Difficult to Understand?'[32] – creates a world in which musical figures that ought to line up, twist away from one another, as would happen if one could shift vantage point from three to four dimensions.[33] It thus undermines the idealist notion that the human mind can only process one fixed type of geometry.

Berg's interest in number mysticism is often regarded with embarrassment by commentators, but modern mathematics was all about mystery. For most of the nineteenth century it was about getting rid of it. Rigorous finite constructions were found for results that had previously relied on intuitive but imprecise notions involving infinities.[34] For example, easily graspable but ill-defined terms like 'tending to zero' or 'tending to infinity', which Newton and Leibniz required for the calculus, were in the 1860s defined in terms of finite real numbers.[35] In 1872, over two millennia too late to save poor Hippasus, Richard Dedekind finally found a finite method for constructing the irrational numbers from the rationals.[36] However, all this success to demystify the subject came to an abrupt end at the beginning of the twentieth century. Spurred on by Georg Cantor's invention of set theory in (1870-7), mathematicians Gottlieb Frege and Bertrand Russell, who claimed a kind of Pythagorean mysticism as his motiva-

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[31] His article on the experiments, published in a sympathetic British periodical, the *Quarterly Journal of Science*, was titled 'On Space of Four Dimensions' (1878). In a letter to Slade he made clear his agenda: 'to investigate the *real* existence of a four-dimensional space ... by *experience*, that is by observation of *facts*'. Treitel, *Science for the Soul*, 4, 20.

[32] Alban Berg, 'Warum ist Schönbergs Musik so schwer verständlich?', Arnold Schönberg zum 50. Geburtstage, 13 September 1924, *Sonderheft der Musikblätter des Anbruch*, 6. Jg., (August-September-Heft 1924), 329–341; translated into Cornelius Cardew as 'Why is Schoenberg's Music so Difficult to Understand?' in Willi Reich, *The Life and Work of Alban Berg*, (New York, 1965), 189-204. As the title suggests, Berg was developing ideas from Schoenberg's earlier 'Warum neue Melodien schwerverständlich sind', *Die Konzertwoche* (Vienna: Universal Edition, 1913); reprinted with translation by Bryan R. Simms ('Why New Melodies Are Difficult to Understand') in *Perspectives of New Music* 16 (1977-78), 115-16.

[33] Three points that are coincident in xyz-space, $a_1 = (7,7,7)$, $a_2 = (7,7,7)$, $a_3 = (7,7,7)$, say, might be distinct in $wxyz$-hyperspace: $a_1 = (6,7,7,7)$, $a_2 = (7,7,7,7)$, $a_3 = (8,7,7,7)$. Although he doesn't put it in these terms, Berg's analysis effectively translates Schoenberg's 4-dimensional compositional thought back into ordinary 3-dimensional music, which, as the title of the essay indicates, is much easier for the listener to understand.

[34] These intuitive methods have since been put on a firm footing with the invention of hyperreal numbers (Edwin Hewitt, 1948): H. Jerome Keisler, *The Hyperreal Line: Real Numbers, Generalizations of the Reals, and Theories of Continua*, Synthese Lib., 242, (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1994), 207—237.

[35] The modern ε-δ form of the limit was given by Karl Weierstrass in his lectures in the 1860s, but the problem of infinitesimals was live for many decades before this.

[36] The so-called 'Dedekind cut' (*Dedekindscher Schnitt*) also works for transcendental numbers like π and e.

tion, tried to found arithmetic outside human intuition in the pure truth of logic, but they ran into insuperable difficulties.[37] Intuition yields axioms, and experience confirms their truth; in the end it is the human mind, not pure logic that guarantees the validity of arithmetic, and so there is always going to be a mystery at its core. In an essay of 1913, Robert Musil summed up the situation as follows: after pioneering mathematics had brought physics, technology, and machinery 'into the most beautiful kind of existence, the mathematicians […] looked all the way to the bottom and found that the whole building was standing in mid air'.[38]

Contemporary Viennese artists, including Berg, imbibed these ideas through the positivism of University of Vienna physicist Ernst Mach and the theosophy of Rudolf Steiner.[39] According to Mach, sensations like heat, colour, pressures, sounds, space and time – what he called 'neutral elements' – were the irreducible basis of knowledge. Any conceptualization or abstraction – be it ordinary language or Maxwell's equations – was used for convenience and said nothing about what is actually out there. Schoenberg and Kandinsky's expressionism can be seen as the attempt to recreate the pre-cognitive sensual melee free of concept – even though this, within the confines of Mach's theory, would not have been possible.[40] In keeping with the divorce between matter and perception that non-Euclidean geometry had instituted, Steiner argued that, since mathematics was independent from the immediacy of sensual experience, the abstract reasoning involved in deriving theorems from axioms could provide practice for achieving the higher intuition he thought necessary to access spiritual being.[41] Now that modern science could not be understood without dedicated training, Steiner's quasi-scientific attempts to understand spiritual experience and to approach it via mathematics offered a substitute for the shudder of the infinite contemporary physicists were experiencing from the beauty of their formulae.[42]

Number mysticism and the occult were not Berg's only source for the philosophical consequences of nineteenth-century advances and catastrophes in mathematics. They could also be found

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[37] When Russell finally put a stop to this dream by discovering a now well-known paradox, his German counterpart, Gottlieb Frege, remarked: 'Your discovery of the contradiction caused me the greatest surprise and, I would almost say, consternation, since it has shaken the basis on which I intended to build arithmetic'. The paradox: consider the set *S* of all sets that don't belong to themselves. Does *S* belong to itself? If it does it doesn't; if it doesn't it does. The quotation: Frege to Russell, 22 June 1902, *From Frege to Gödel* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967), 127. See *EEE*, 39-51 for further discussion of the issue.

[38] Robert Musil, 'The Mathematical Man' [1913], *Precision and Soul: Essays and Addresses*, ed. and trans. Burton Pike and David S. Luft (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1990), 39-43; 41-2.

[39] When Berg sought more concrete information about numerology, his friend Günther Marstrand directed him to Steiner's work: Wolfgang Gratzner, *Zur 'wunderlichen Mystik' Alban Bergs* (Wien: Böhlau, 1993), 122.

[40] For Mach's influence on Schoenberg, see Walter Frisch, *German Modernism* (Berkeley: California University Press, 2005), 46.

[41] Skuli Sigurdsson, '[Review of Renatus Ziegler, *Mathematik und Geisteswissenschaft: Mathematische Einfuhrung in die Philosophie als Geisteswissenschaft in Anküpfung an Plato, Cusanus, Goethe, Hegel und Steiner* (Dorach, Switzerland: Philosophisch-Anthroposophischer Verlag, 1992)]', *Isis*, 87(1) (Mar., 1996), 148-149.

[42] For example, between March 24 and June 27 1905 in Berlin, Steiner gave a series of lectures on the fourth dimension: *Die vierte Dimension : Mathematik und Wirklichkeit : Hörernotizen von Vorträgen über den mehrdimensionalen Raum und von Fragenbeantwortungen zu mathematischen Themen* (Dornach, Schweiz : R. Steiner Verlag, 1995). He exploits the fact that fourth dimensional objects, such as the tesseract, are nearly, but not quite, possible for the human mind to imagine. If Berg did not read this specific work, he certainly would have read others by Steiner in a similar vein.

in many of Nietzsche's middle period writing, which Berg read in his pre-*Wozzeck* years and quoted from in letters. Viewing the opera *Wozzeck* as a dialogue across the decades, Nietzsche provides an important intermediary between the separate critiques of rationality being offered up by Büchner's text and in Berg's music.

Truth on Trial

It is a commonplace in the literature on *Woyzeck* to suggest that the play offers J.C. Woyzeck the fair trial he never received in life.[43] However, anyone seeing the play with Nietzsche ringing in their ears, as Berg did, might ask whether it is truth itself that is on trial. At the beginning of Book I of *Beyond Good and Evil* (*Jenseits von Gut und Böse*, hereafter *BGE*, 1886), Nietzsche asked '*What* really is it in us that wants "the truth"?' This cut against the grain of traditional Socratic-Christian-scientific epistemology, which was only concerned about the certainty of truth, by suggesting that it is far from obvious that pursuing truth is even a good thing. Büchner's play, which shares the same fragmentary organization as Nietzsche's hectic interrogation, anticipates this by highlighting the fundamental incompatibility between the determinism of Newtonian mechanics and the idea of responsibility that underpins justice.[44] For Büchner, a professional zoologist as well as an active revolutionary, there could have been no better illustration of this than the report by Doctor J. C. Clarus, who was called upon to decide whether J. C. Woyzeck was mentally fit enough to stand trial.[45] Generally acknowledged to be the template for the Doctor in *Woyzeck*, Clarus was unusually aware of the contradictions of his role, taking it upon himself to ignore his own professional opinion that J. C. Woyzeck was insane and declare him of sound mind in his report to the court. He accepted that the ultimate cause of any crime could be found in external events or in internal biology, the corollary of Newtonian determinism, but he felt that the effectiveness of the law would be compromised if every criminal urge was linked to 'a specific drive or an instinctive compulsion'.[46] Truth was supposed to serve the cause of justice, but borderline cases like Woyzeck's revealed that there could be such a thing as too much truth.

In Berg's time, as can be seen in the writing of Robert Musil or Carl Schmitt, it would have been understood that science was functioning in two separate capacities in a court case. Firstly it was evidentiary: it supplied facts that support one side or the other. Secondly, it was theological: in the absence of divine justice of the medieval court – where God would intervene to decide guilt or innocence through ordeal or combat – it was necessary that science, as the arbiter of truth in secular society,

[43] For example: Theodor Adorno, *Berg: Der Meister des Kleinsten Übergangs* [1968] in *Die musikalischen Monographien* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1986), 429.
[44] Büchner's notes for a lecture course he planned to give on philosophy show that he regarded attempts by the idealists to reconcile determinism and freedom as a fudge.
[45] The report was published in a medical journal to which his father subscribed.
[46] 'einen besondern Trieb oder einen instinktartigen Zwang': quoted in John Reddick, *Georg Büchner: The Shattered Whole* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 327.

could lend its credulity, and hence the aura of justice, to situations that were otherwise undecidable.[47] Both *Woyzeck* and Book I of *BGE* target just this kind of theological fiction, which had come to inhabit certain post-Christian domains of thought, illicitly claiming to guarantee secure knowledge.

In the scene in the Doctor's surgery, Büchner diagnosed romanticism and scientism as two sides of the same idealist disease. The Doctor believes that the rational mind can exert complete control over the physical instincts: Woyzeck can live on nothing but beans and deny his urge to urinate indefinitely, and he himself can keep his own temper in check. Woyzeck takes the equally ridiculous position of the Romantic, believing that if only he could decipher the patterns in the rings of toadstools, breaking through to the truth of nature, his problems would be over.[48] For Nietzsche, the philosophical debate about the nature of scientific truth which fell into two camps, both equally metaphysical and which could be regarded as 'philosophical prejudices'. The positivists, who thought theory was only of instrumental value and that the only truth was empirically verifiable data, clung onto the certainty that nothing they know is true, because this one certainty at least is 'secure' and gave them something of the 'faith of former times.[49] The realists, who felt mathematical descriptions of the universe said something fundamental about the absolute, were wrong to think that 'cause' and 'effect' could be 'reified': they are 'conventional fictions for the purpose of designation and communication'.[50] At the same time as they decry metaphysical thinking in science, however, both Nietzsche and Büchner mourn the loss of religion, especially in its roles as comforter, as affirmer of community, and in the deep emotional pleasure it offers, including through art.

Nietzsche was clear then, that science only allowed a 'this-worldly, fallible, hypothetical, perspectival, value-laden, historically developed and simplifying truth'.[51] Büchner too, in his notes on Descartes, lamented the inevitable weakness of scientific knowledge coming, as it does, from the mind of an animal.[52] This attitude is evident in the way the play satirizes the Doctor's mistaken belief in his mastery over nature – exulting in his 'Theorie' after nearly bursting with supressed rage at his inability to bend the social world to his will. Crucially for both, though, this weak, limited truth was still better than the religious superstition that had gone before. Firstly, it allowed rigorous ideology critique. Empirical enquiry can expose the lies that prop up tyrannical regimes. In his pamphlet *Der Hessische Landbote* (1834) – a precursor of Marx and Engels's *Manifest der Kommunistischen Partei* (1848) – Büchner felt he could incite revolution by drawing the workers' attention to, for example, the amount of

[47] Musil – who may have been influenced by Schmitt's theological conception of the state (*Politische Theologie*, 1922) – discusses how a completely rational legal system would lead to interminable deadlock since there is no way of guaranteeing any decision is the right one. See, in particular, Chapter 111, 'To the Legal Mind, Insanity is an All-or-Nothing Proposition', which explores a similar set of problems to *Woyzeck*: *The Man without Qualities* [*Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften*, 1930, 1933, 1943], trans. Sophie Wilkins (Oxford: Picador, 1995), 583-88.
[48] Büchner's anti-idealism is much more explicit in *Lenz*.
[49] *BGE* I, 10.
[50] BGE I, 21.
[51] John T. Wilcox, *Truth and Value in Nietzsche: A Study of His Metaethics and Epistemology* (Ann Arbor: Michigan University Press, 1974), 156.
[52] Notes on Descartes see Benn 53-62 for ref. written on same note paper as Wozzeck

money the Hessian authorities wasted at court. *Woyzeck* might not have been primarily socially critical in intent, but the degree to which it is can be put down to its empirical dimension: verisimilitude born of scrupulous research. In contrast to his early thoughts about Wagner in the *Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche came to believe that the myths and symbolic thinking in tragedy were 'a mark of lower culture'; value was to be found, not in imposing 'metaphysical and artistic' 'errors', but 'small unpretentious truths born of 'rigorous thinking'.[53] For both, science allowed better-informed decisions to be made about one's existence in the present. Büchner hoped to a achieve a number of modest reforms: a curb on excessive court spending, universal suffrage, a free press and, most importantly, the provision of essentials like food.[54] For Nietzsche, a non-metaphysical science that avoided the pitfalls of positivism or realism forced the modern to confront the fact that there is no higher reality – Platonic ideals, Christian heaven, Kantian noumenal, communist utopia – but only this world.

Berg often referred to Nietzsche in his letters to Helene as one of their 'heroes', but the name signified a set of mutually understood ideas that required no further clarification. The few occasions he mentions specifics are revealing. In answer to Helene's question 'What is our goal?' he alludes to the passage in *The Gay Science* (*Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*, 1882/87) where Nietzsche dreamily evoked an image of the 'open seas' that now lay ahead.[55] Those seas were open because science and rationality had cleared away the flotsam and jetsam of religious superstition and availed humanity of the opportunity to create new and better values unencumbered by religious absolutes.

(3.III) COMPOSING BY NUMBERS

If the occult source for the numerical aspect of Berg's music was more than just a cultish fad, and provided a glimpses into the new way of seeing the world generated by contemporary science and mathematics, then it might be expected that these ideas could be seen in other qualities of the music. The problem for any would-be interpreter is that Berg imbibed these ideas haphazardly not only through the occultism, Nietzsche, the Büchner, as mentioned, but through many other sources, not always traceable by the historian.[56] The various tonal-atonal experiments, rhythmic experiments or 'inventions' certainly look like they were influenced by a generalized 'mathematical turn', and there will be a cautious

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[53] (*HH* I, 3).Calinescu regards Nietzsche's *Der Fall Wagner* as the earliest ideology critique.

[54] Previously, Marxist critics put Büchner's lack of vision down to a lack of understanding of Hegel's dialectic, but his emphasis on immediate ameliorative measures was due to a more realistic (proto-Nietzschean) acceptance that misery and suffering was an inevitable part of life. 'Hier rächt sich die Unkenntnis von Hegels Dialektik – und die Unreife der gesellschaftlichen Umstände. Vom Fels des Atheismus aus erblickt Marx ein Gelobtes Land, Büchner dagegen nur das Grau in hoffnungslosen Elends': Hans Mayer, *Georg Büchner und seine Zeit* [1946] (Frankfurt a. M., 1972), 365.

[55] Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, trans. Josefine Naukhoff (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 199. (Book V, 343) Berg to Helene, *Berg's Letters to his Wife*, 90-1. {German edition} Berg slightly misremembers the passage, writing 'new seas'. Nietzsche scholars group GS with BGE into the same period, and articulating a fairly coherent stance.

[56] He read scientist Josef Popper-Lynkeus's famous *A Realist's Fantasies*, for example, and one might speculate that he read other similar books, such as Henri Poincaré's *La science et l'hypothèse* (1902), which was widely discussed in Germany and Austria after the publication of the German translation: *Wissenschaft und Hypothese*, trans. Ferdinand and Lisbeth Lindemann (Leipzig: B. G. Teubner, 1904).

attempt to set up correspondences with a few specific scientific configurations in the next chapter. Here, however, the purpose isn't to consider individual ideas, but rather the philosophical transformation wrought by their aggregate effect, and how this is manifested in the work.

It was not that the scientific – or 'mathematical' – way of operating in the world necessarily changed at this point in history, or that it was realized to be historically specific and unusual, but rather that the world as described by science was becoming confused with the world itself: what was actually secondary, was being thought of as primary. The most sophisticated form of this argument was advanced by Heidegger, who was fully conversant in the language of the latest mathematics and didn't, like Spengler, try to pretend that scientific knowledge, let alone mathematical knowledge, was culturally contingent. Music doesn't do philosophy, and *Wozzeck* doesn't do the Heidegger critique. It does, however, set up a poetized form of the subject-object manner of apprehending phenomena, in which the projection of secondary mathematical knowledge onto primary phenomena is disrupted in a way that is congruent with the critique. [57]

(3.III.1) *The Mathematical Projection*

Against the contemporary bias which saw science as a positivist (in Mach's sense) enterprise, Heidegger argued that the fundamental difference between medieval (Aristotelian) and modern (Galilean-Newtonian) science is not that modern science is fact based and medieval was based on speculative concepts.[58] Both are equally empirical, conceptual and rely on measurement and calculation. For Aristotle as much as Galileo basic scientific procedure was to infer propositions inductively from observation. The difference is that modern science is *mathematical*.[59] Heidegger's aim was to show that mathematical turn in science in the latter half of the nineteenth century was something already inherent in the Copernican-Galilean-Newtonian revolution of the sixteenth century.[60] Looking at it from a different angle, he was using the myth of the Scientific Revolution to tease out the nature of contemporary patterns of thought.

Heidegger takes his definition from the Greek *τα μαθηματικά* and, although it does not refer to numbers or their study, numbers do provide a good example. Firstly, it is 'that which may be learned' like the cardinal number '7'. Secondly, it is the process of learning itself, but in the specific sense of 'self-giving' or 'grasping': 'we only expressly recognize something which, in some way we already have'. '7' can be learnt by abstracting from many groups of 7, but this 7ness is not out there, it is supplied by

[57] For a different kind of dualist reading of Berg's music see: John Covach, 'Balzacian Mysticism, Palindromic Design, and Heavenly Time in Berg's Music', *50 Jahre* Wozzeck *von Alban Berg*, ed. Harald Goertz, Otto Kolleritsch, et al, (Graz: Universal Edition, 1978), 5-29. Covach contrasts an aspect that corresponds with Schoenberg's attempts to express Swedenborgian heaven in music with the representation of real people through encryption.

[58] Martin Heidegger, 'Modern Science, Metaphysics and Mathematics' [1936], *Basic Writings* (Oxford: Routledge, 1993), 271-305. Hereafter referred to as MMM.

[59] MMM, 271-3.

[60] The very fact that it took until Nietzsche and Heidegger for this to be fully realized shows that epistemic ruptures – and the overthrow of the Ptolemaic cosmology deserves this description if anything does – are not sudden wholesale changes of thought pattern, but can rumble on for centuries.

the learner and then taken by him.[61] 'The mathematical is thus the fundamental presupposition of the knowledge of things', it is the process of concept formation.[62]

The mathematical as the ability to abstract essences from concrete situations, then, has been about for at least as long as there has been civilization. But there is, according to Heidegger, something radically different about Galilean-Newtonian or 'modern' thought.[63] He cites as an example Newton's First Law of Motion: 'every body continues in its state of rest or uniform motion unless impressed by a force to change its state'.[64] For Aristotle force lay within the nature of the body itself. The earthiness of a rock meant that it moved towards the earth, the fieriness of fire drew it upwards towards the celestial realm, because that was where they naturally belonged.[65]

He gave eight ways in which Newton's Principle of Motion differs from Aristotle's conception. The most important here is the seventh:

> [The] concept of nature in general changes. Nature is no longer the *inner* principle out of which the motion of the body follows; rather, nature is the mode of the variety of the changing relative positions of bodies, the manner in which they are present in space and time, which themselves are domains of possible positional orders and determinations of order and have no special traits anywhere.[66]

Any inner essence of a body – its earthiness, fieriness, wateriness, airiness – is now irrelevant: all that matters is its mass and its position on the space-time grid.

According to the positivistic epistemology then dominant, modern science was meant to be based on experience, and yet the *body left to itself* in the First Law does not exist – it is an axiom. The *mathematical projection* (*Entwurf*) takes an abstraction of the world as axiomatic and then projects – literally 'throws forward' – that axiom out onto the world again. The projection takes one kind of essence (threeness, mass, dimension, position etc.) but skips over others (rockiness, treeness etc.). It posits a set of axioms, *fundamental propositions*, so that the structure of things is determined in in advance. By doing this 'the projection first opens up a domain where […] facts show themselves'. 'Bodies have no concealed qualities, powers, and capacities': they are only what they are in the mathematical projection. This sets the parameters of the sorts of inquiry that may be undertaken and ensures that science inevitably yields certainties: 'a line of questioning can be instituted in such a way that it poses conditions in advance to which nature must answer in one way or another'. The question for philosophy between Descartes and Nietzsche was not whether scientific results were true, but the extent to which the mathematical theory corresponded to immediate 'intuitively given nature'.[67]

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[61] MMM, 275-6.
[62] MMM, 278.
[63] MMM, 281.
[64] MMM, 280.
[65] MMM, 283-5.
[66] MMM, 288.
[67] MMM, 294.

A nice summary of this can be found in a contemporary work by Husserl, who was advancing a similar argument. Like Heidegger, Husserl was a mathematician who 'delighted in theory, particularly in axiomatics' and who appreciated the value of science.[68] However, he too was concerned about the dangers of a metaphysics that placed the mathematical prior to the world. The 'new', 'unprecedented' characteristic of 'Galilean science' is that through 'Galileo's mathematization of nature, nature itself is idealized under the guidance of the new mathematics; nature itself becomes […] a mathematical manifold', that is, there is 'the surreptitious substitution of the mathematically substructed world of idealities for the only real world, the one that is actually given through perception, that is ever experienced and experienceable – our everyday life-world'.[69] The danger of this becomes clear from a definition of 'disenchantment' (*Entzauberung*) Max Weber gave in 1917: it is the 'belief that, *if one only wanted to*, one *could* find out at any time' the knowledge necessary to understand 'the conditions under which one lives', that 'one can, in principle, master all things by calculation'.[70]

What is crucial to understand about Heidegger and Husserl's mathematical projection/mathematization of nature is that they are not saying either that there is anything suspect about mathematical truth: with the correct axioms in place, $2 + 2 = 4$ and, for a right-angled triangle, $a^2 + b^2 = c^2$. What is more, there were perfectly good empirical reasons for believing that the equations bequeathed by Newton, Maxwell, Einstein are true. However, truth had its origins in a pre-reflective engagement with the world and it could not be conceptualized. Heidegger argued that the reason truth was taken to mean only propositional truth – really only a secondary way of understanding the world – was because it is the type of truth that serves man in modernity.[71] That is, for modern *Dasein*, propositional truth has become *sacred*; in other words, Weber's disenchantment is actually a redistribution of enchantment to the narrower domain of scientific and mathematical truth.

(3.III.2) *Mathematicity*

It is possible to take Berg's comment that the repetitive passacaglia theme represents the Doctor's *idée fixe* one stage further. It is true that it remains concealed in the inner parts, and is comprised of an intervallic structure that is difficult to retain in the memory, but it does add to the quality of the score I am calling its *mathematicity*. The term is formed by analogy with Musil critic Walter Moser's description of a certain type of science-like prose to be found in *The Man without Qualities* (*Der Mann ohne Eigen-*

[68] Patrick A. Heelan, 'Husserl's Later Philosophy of Natural Science', *Philosophy of Science*, 54(3) (Sep., 1987), 368-390; 370.
[69] Husserl, *Die Krisis der europäischen Wissenschaften und die transzendentale Phenomenologie* [1934-37], Husserliana VI, ed. Walter Biemel (Nijhoff: The Hague, 1954). English translation by D. Carr (1970), *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology* (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1970), 23, 48-49.
[70] Max Weber, 'Science as a Vocation' [*Wissenschaft als Beruf*, 1918] in *Max Weber's 'Science as a Vocation'*, ed. Peter Lassman, Irving Velody, Herminio Martins (London, Boston : Unwin Hyman, 1989), 3-34; 13, 30.
[71] Mark A. Wrathall, 'Truth and the essence of truth in Heidegger's thought', *The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger*, ed. Charles B. Guignon, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 241-67; 263.

schaften, written 1921-42, published in parts in 1930, 33 and 42) as 'facticity' or 'scientificity'.[72] Musil was working within the Naturalist tradition, but whereas Naturalism had a pretence to scientific objectivity, Musil incorporated science-like passages into the prose for purposes of parody, commentary, or comparison with ordinary prose. If audibility is not necessary for an aspect of the score to be meaningful, then this broader feature of mathematicity can be seen as Berg's attempt to bring a fictional form of mathematics into the score. As Moser remarks about Musil's scientificity, it looks like mathematics, but it isn't: instead it seems designed to be a translation of Büchner's parody of the pedantic and indifferent attitude of the scientist.[73]

The passacaglia is dominated by the number 7 and this pervasive 7-ness when combined with other types of conspicuous regularity, constitute the score's mathematicity.[74]

(3.III.2.i) The Passacaglia Theme

The theme cycles through all 12 notes of the chromatic scale and the number of beats allocated to each of the twelve notes is as follows: 4, 4, 4, 4, 2, 2, 2, 2, 1, 1, 1, 1. The notes are thus grouped into three groups of four, with the lengths of the notes in each half that of the last. The cycle takes:

$$(4 \times 4) + (4 \times 2) + (4 \times 1) \quad = 4 \times (4 + 2 + 1)$$
$$= 4 \times 7$$

– a multiple of 7, beats. The 4:2:1 ratio determines the shape of many subsequent variations, or groups of variations: see Varr. 2 and 3, for example.

(3.III.2.ii) The Variations

There are $21 = 3 \times 7$ variations, and all variations up to and including Var. 18 comprise a multiple of either seven beats or seven bars. The last three variations depart from this scheme but restore it as a group. Var.19 has 9 bars, Var. 20 has 18 , Var. 21 has 4.5. Or, in beats, 18, 36, 9, and $18 + 36 + 9 = 7 \times 9$. Also, the ratio 18:36:9 = 2:4:1, which is a permutation of the 4:2:1 from the original theme. Var. 19 also has a complex 2×7 pattern built into it: each of two solo violins and a solo viola has the same seven-quaver pattern separated by a crochet beat (i.e. unison canon), which is repeated seven times. At the end of the variation there is a seven beat pattern in the violas, but each of the beats are of different lengths: 5 + 4 + 4 + 3 + 3 + 2 + 1, measured in quavers. There is a similar pattern in the violins.

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[72] Walter Moser, 'The Factual in Fiction: The Case of Robert Musil', *Poetics Today*, 5(2), The Construction of Reality in Fiction (1984), 411-428; 411, 413.

[73] Or, given Berg and Schoenberg's long-running feud with formalists like Schenker, it may have been parodying their overly-scientific approach to music.

[74] The choice of '7' in this instance is multiply determined: Blavatsky's *septenary* structure of nature and conscious experience, the seven letters of the word 'Wozzeck' or the designation of the opera as Op. 7, Schoenberg's *Pierrot Lunaire* (1912), which has the opus number 21 and is arranged into $3 \times 7 = 21$ scenes.
Thomas Mann is surely parodying contemporaries like Schoenberg and Berg in *The Magic Mountain* (*Der Zauberberg*, 1924), where the number 7 determines every aspect of the plot: Hans Castorp's parents die when he is seven, he spends seven years at the mountain resort, where his room number is 34 (3+4=7), he has sex after seven months there, and so on.

(3.III.2.iii) Counting

This 5 + 4 + 4 + 3 + 3 + 2 + 1 pattern is one of many examples where the durations of a series of notes are consecutive whole numbers when measured in some subdivision of the beat. There is almost always some scrambling involved so that the patterning is not always immediately obvious. The following is the rhythm of the notes used for the opening *e-flat* and then the *b* that follows it measured in 32nd notes:

e-flat:	7 3 4 5 6 4 2 1
b:	7 5×2 2 4 2 3 2 2

The numbers are underlined when the note is held. The first set counts down from 7 to 1, but 3-6 are reversed and a 4 is interpolated, introducing the 4:2:1 ratio again. The second counts down through 5, 4, 3, 2, separating each of these durations with one of 2 (the 5 is actually a 10, being 5×16th notes).

The counting becomes a characteristic of the Doctor's speech and is often used to colour the words. One example occurs in Var 1, in mm. 500-2, he has the line 'Die Natur, Wozzeck! Der Mensch ist frei! In dem Menschen verklärt sich die Individualität zur Freiheit!' which contains the increasing subdivision of the beat into 1, 3, 6 and finally 8 notes. Through what is a highly unnatural rhythm for ordinary speech, and hence recitative, he is able to demonstrate his own 'freedom' and make his point. Or you might prefer the contrary interpretation: the numerical rhythm ironically points up the fact that his every action is governed by mathematics and so he is not free at all. The counting also infects Wozzeck's line: at the climax of his speech between Varr. 9 and 10, there is a division of consecutive beats into 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 8 in the upper strings at the end of Var. 9 and then into 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 in the vocal part at the start of Var. 10.

(3.III.2.iv) Symmetry

The five rings used to represent the toadstool rings in Var. 12 is built out of vertically and horizontally symmetric figures in harp + celeste, two solo cellos and two violins. The vocal line sees Wozzeck descending and then ascending the maximally symmetric whole tone scale. In the simplest and perhaps the most poignant variation, no. 7, Berg deployed one of his favourite techniques, the musical palindrome, to embody Wozzeck's never-ending frustration. The only notes played are those of the passacaglia theme, notes 1-8 and 11-12 in the horns, by twos, forward then back, with notes 9-10 played tremolo on the bridge by two solo cellos. (The variation runs into the next.) One word says it all: 'Ach!'

To be sure there are aspects of the mathematicity, as sketched here, that are available to the naïve listener. The Doctor's rigid, arithmetic counting resonates with the detached cruelty of the Büchner character, and the sense that Wozzeck's cry emanates from the void and then disappears ineffectually back into it owes everything to the palindromic accompaniment. However, even if the aesthetic object is restricted to what is perceived in the theatre, that perception has already been shaped, for an elite group at least, by prior knowledge of the score. One of the few commentators to consider how the supplementary visual component might add to the auditory experience, Dominque Jameux, has argued that a full understanding of Berg's music – and by 'understand' he means the ability to 'translate aural

information into structural meaning' – can only be achieved by absorbing clues from the scores.[75] Whatever Berg said to the members of the public at his lectures, in a musical culture where the primary means of dissemination is through the printed form, the extent to which the composer thought about the look of his scores and how it would effect reception should not be underestimated.

(3.III.3) ***How the Music Goes***

However, an analysis of 'how the music goes' reveals that the conspicuous mathematicity does not appear to yield Jameux's helpful pointers towards structural meaning. In thinking about how such a syntactic analysis might proceed, the most promising piece of equipment in the armamentarium is Schoenberg's principle of developing variation, particularly as derived from Brahms.[76] For Schoenberg, Brahms's techniques of motivic manipulation meant that his music was as expressive as language – as if every note seemed to be saying something. He argued, therefore, that Brahms's innovations would only reach their full potential when employed in opera; and, conversely, that they will help to overcome some of the problems in contemporary opera.[77] The plasticity they engender would allow both the vocal line and the dramatic movement to retain a sense of musical logic despite being constrained to follow the libretto. Here he echoes the common complaint against the Berlioz-Wagner-Liszt-Strauss tradition in which, although there is thematic integration, the music very often eschews musical logic, lurching from one mood to another as the conscious composer forces his music to follow the non-musical dictates of his literary source. Schoenberg was intimating that he had realized this Brahmsian potential in his own operas, particularly in *Erwartung*. He may also have been thinking of *Wozzeck*, and scene I.iv does provide a near perfect example of how a scene might follow the dictates of musical and dramatic logic simultaneously by using developing variation.

It is possible to relate the music-dramatic logic to the passacaglia outline by appealing to Brahms's variation form as exemplified by the Variations and Fugue on a Theme by Handel, Op. 24, (1861). He introduced a further layer of complexity into the linear or circular processes of his Bach and Beethoven precedents. Bach's Goldberg Variations, BWV 988, (1741) have a canon at intervals of 1 through to 9 in every third variation. (This might have been number symbolism relating to the Holy Trinity: $3 \times 3 = 9$, and there are 3×10 variations.) Whereas otherwise the Goldbergs resemble an ex-

[75] Dominique Jameux, 'Entendre Berg et le voir: Notes sur les relations entre structure, écriture et audition dans l'oeuvre d'Alban Berg', *Critique* 37 (1981), 485-95.

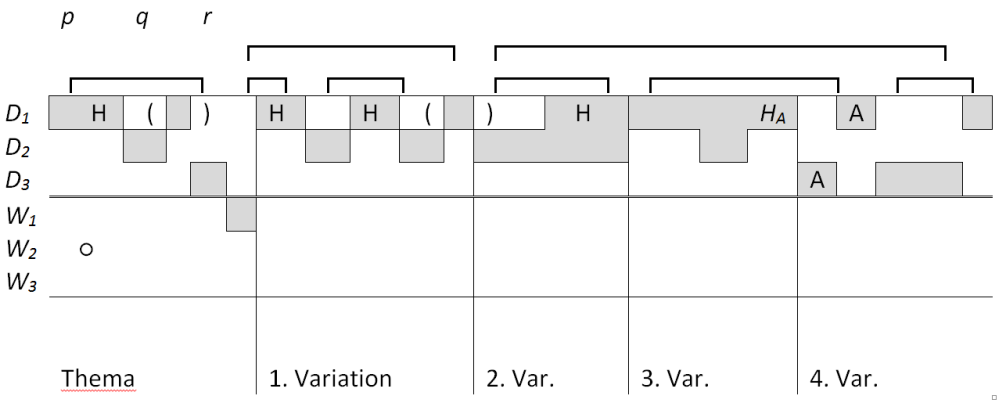
[76] For Schoenberg's most succinct definition of developing variation see: Arnold Schoenberg, 'Brahms the Progressive' [1947], *Style and Idea*, ed. Leo Stein, trans. Leo Black (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975), 398-441; 407. For a summary of Schoenberg's theory of developing variation, see David Epstein, 'Schoenberg's Studies of Motives, Motive-Forms, and Developing Variations', *Beyond Orpheus: Studies in Musical Structure* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT, 1979), 207-210. For a more detailed treatment of Brahms's influence on Schoenberg see: Walter Frisch, 'Brahms, Developing Variation, and the Schoenberg Critical Tradition', *19th-Century Music* 5(3) (Spring, 1982), 215-232. That Berg thought himself in part of the Brahms lineage, can be inferred from his comment that the composer was '*in many respects more modern*—than Strauss, there, namely, where Schönberg first started': Alban Berg to Willi Reich, 22, 28 April 1934 in '1934, Alban Berg, and the Shadow of Politics: Documents of a Troubled Year', translated by Margaret Notley, *Alban Berg and His World*, ed. Christopher Hailey (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 234-6. Italics represent underlining in the original.

[77] 'Brahms the Progressive', 440-41.

tended suite predicated on contrast, Beethoven's variation forms are often dynamic, rivalling the tonal forward drive of the sonata form movements. A good example of this is the Adagio of the 'Archduke' Piano Trio in B-flat, Op. 97, (1811) in which in each variation the beat into ever smaller subdivisions: 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 8. In Brahms's Handel variations there is large-scale dynamic progress towards the muscular culminating fugue but within this a number of substructures jostle for precedence at the local level. For example, the 20 variations are split into two halves, with a fermata between them, superimposing a binary structure on the whole. Then, within these two halves, many of the variations occur in pairs – for example, treating the same pianistic technical challenge in two different ways.

Where the Handel Variations had a binary structure, Scene I.iv is in ternary form. In the A (Varr. I-IV) and A' (Varr. XIII-XII) sections the Doctor is doing most of the talking, and in the B (Varr. V-XII) section it is Wozzeck. Thematically, and aside from the passacaglia notes, the A sections are built almost exclusively out of material from the Doctor's vocal line in the *Thema*. The B section uses thematic material from Wozzeck's experiences in the first three scenes – that is, it varies material from outside of a nominally closed form. Just as the Brahms variations lead towards the fugue, Berg's variation form leads towards the climax in the final variation. This is preceded by two sub-climaxes that are built up to in the A and B sections – and, in terms of the act and the opera, the climax of the scene is itself only a sub-climax.

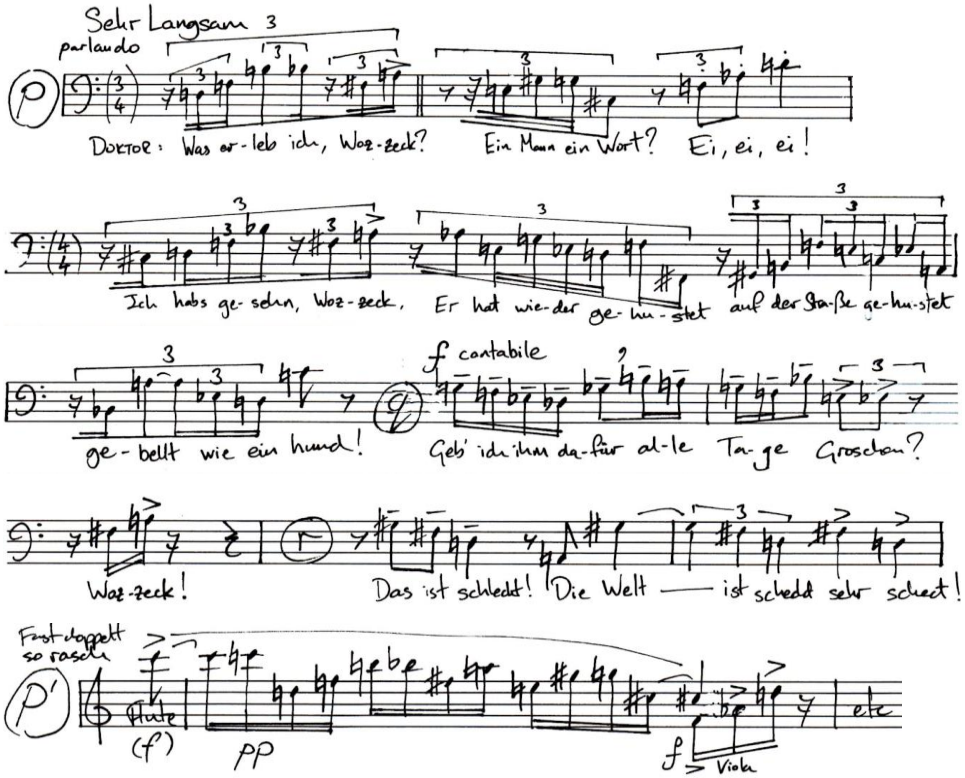
Fig 3.1: Scene I.iv, section A



The scene, like the Brahms, also has interlocking substructures. However, following the action carefully, it can be heard that these can be divided into three nested subdivisions of coherent musical units. In Fig 3.1, sentences and phrases are marked with a brace, ⌐¬ , and then the smallest motivic fragmentation is indicated in the table; there are 38 phrases in the scene as a whole, of which only the first six are shown here. All of these divisions are readily graspable by the ear but, as can be seen, there is only the loosest of relationships between this structure and the 21 formal variations. There is more than one phrase per variation, and the phrases often straddle the formal division between variations. The Doctor's vocal line of the *Thema* section divides into 3 subthemes – marked *p*, *q*, *r* in Ex. 3.2 – that undergo developing variation in each of the two A sections. They each correspond to a musical topic,

D_1, D_2, D_3, respectively, that are used to accompany three aspects of the Doctor's character on display in this scene. D_1 is used when he is directly dealing with Wozzeck and stretches from a business-like attitude to outright anger. D_2 is used for scientific objectivity and often also captures his callousness and sadism. The final topic D_3 is used when he is emotionally moved – ranging from the dark depression at the outset to ecstasy at the end of the scene. Wozzeck has three similar topics, W_1, W_2, W_3, between which he alternates in a similar fashion in the B section.

In Ex. 3.2, I have given an example of how theme *p* is varied over the course of the scene; many more examples could be given for *p*, as well as *q* and *r* . Fig. 3.1 could easily be expanded to show how the various structures interrelate in the A and A' sections. Firstly, each of the topics develops towards the climax of the scene, $H_{A\prime}$, in a series of sub-climaxes, marked H (or , H_A, for the climax of section A). However, their progress there is fragmented as the music alternates between D_1 and D_2 in section A, then D_2 and D_3 in section A', re-enacting the *p* - *q* - *p* - *r* layout of the *Thema* on the larger scale (it is also repeated at the end of A in Varr. III and IV). In each of the sections, the fragments are arranged into a paragraph structure: section A consists of two sentences which contain three and two phrases respectively, as well as a few minor interpolations. Thus Berg used the plasticity of his thematic material to fit the fragmentary nature of the Doctor's schizophrenic dialogue, but simultaneously to outline a coherent musical structure.



Ex. 3.2 Wozzeck: I.iv, 'Thema' split into subthemes *p*, *q*, *r*, and one variant *p'*.

It would be possible to continue and describe how the B section uses leitmotifs from earlier in the opera – including the important point that Wozzeck's leitmotifs are all borrowed from other people. But, what has happened here should be obvious by now: once a formalist analysis is embarked upon, the inner process turns out to be more algebraic, requires more numerical labelling and more abstraction than the overtly arithmetical aspects of the score.

There are two things to take away from this. Firstly, it is possible to see from this second analysis that the aural experience of the music in the theatre is very different from the way in which the visual clues direct the score reader to listen to the music. Rather than the complementary aspect of sight and sound that Jameux feels is necessary to appreciate Berg's music, here there is a disconnect between the psychological arc that the ear hears and 21 variations of the passacaglia highlighted by visual cues. Secondly, while an analysis based on developing variation (if presented in more detail than space permits here) would conform to the auditory trace, it is still not music and what is more it leaves behind whatever it is that makes it music. It would be a trivial task to compose an alternative version of the score that conformed to the same abstract structure, but that had no musical worth whatsoever. And however close one gets to the text and detailed one's explanations become, this will always be the case. In the Beethoven-Brahms line that Berg is working in, the score is complicit in welding sight and sound into a unified experience. The theoretical-analytic understanding of the music and the impression it leaves on the ear serve to complement and reinforce one another. There are many passages in Brahms, for example, that are difficult to fully understand until one has seen the notes. (Think of the last few bars of the second capriccio of the Acht Klavierstücke, Op. 76, which cannot be heard in the right way without knowledge of the layout on the page.)

The result of these two features is that the mathematicity in the score – standing in as a parody for the second type of close analysis – prises apart this comfortable alliance of visual and aural modalities. When a Schenkerian engages in structural listening, just as when a scientist observes a physical phenomenon, they can convince themselves that the theory is at one with the experience. For the auditor who has made a study of the score of *Wozzeck*, a performance in the theatre produces a disconnect between knowledge of the score's mathematicity and the aural experience. It thereby poeticizes the experience of a divided individual who projects a mathematical understanding onto the phenomenological experience of the world. But whereas previous music had ended up normalizing this scientific perception, as if the mathematical and the world were one, it disrupts it by setting up a jarring dissonance between the abstractable qualities and the non-abstractable essence of the experience.

ESSENTIAL LISTENING

The target of Heidegger's critique is not science, but scientism – the arrogant and misguided belief that the human animal can somehow achieve mastery over nature. As we have seen, this was also Büch-

ner's belief, and a theme that comes through strongly in *Wozzeck*: the search for the always elusive truth (the *Urgesetz*, as he called it) can give shape and meaning to one's life, especially in the absence of religion, but the idea that one can appropriate nature and direct it wholly towards one's goals is an egotistical absurdity. It is impossible for the individual to excise themselves from their historical moment, and since the mathematical is the defining feature of modern *Dasein*, it is impossible to achieve the sort of worldedness that Heidegger saw as the ideal. In this state the power for abstract rational thought would be one facility amongst many, seamlessly integrated into experience without dominating it. The best that can be hoped for is some sort of accommodation with the mathematical.

In his expressionism, Schoenberg attempted to remove anything that could be abstracted out as a formal structure in order to get rid of the materialist, the conceptual, the mathematical, and to be left with some neutral pre-scientific picture of nature. In *Erwartung*, the highpoint of this style, it is debateable whether he achieved this even in artistic terms: the opera generates a consistent self-contained sound-world and it follows a coherent psychological narrative. But I want to show that it misfires completely when looked at in Heidegger's philosophical terms: it achieves the polar opposite of its discursive aims by becoming entirely mathematical. By contrast, *Wozzeck*, in which the mathematical is overtly incorporated, is at least able to acknowledge its limitations. The key to this in both cases is the 'musical essence' – the quality of music that makes it music, but that is left behind in any verbal or mathematical description. Since it is the infinite or theological element of the musical system, it makes sense to consider how Berg and his contemporaries dealt with those aspects of music that had been treated as transcendent or metaphysical in the absolute music tradition.

The Musical Idea

In *The New Aesthetic of Musical Impotence: A Symptom of Decay?* (*Die neue Aesthetik der musikalische Impotenz: Ein Verwesungssymptom?*, 1920), Hans Pfitzner argued that the music of the Schoenberg Circle was 'impotent' because, however well-structured it might be, it lacked inspiration and turned its back on the fundamentals of music such as harmony and melody.[78] Berg was quick to respond to the attack, taking particular issue with his claim that agreement about the beauty of a melody cannot be reached by 'intellectual means', one may only understand it 'by the rapture it arouses'. 'What the melody says is as deep and as clear, as mystical and as obvious as the Truth'.[79] Since Pfitz-

[78] There was, as usual, a political dimension to this argument: Pfitzner associated atonal music (and its equivalents in other arts) with Bolshevism and Judaism; 'good' art was 'German and true' or 'national and true': Hans Pfitzner, *Gesammelte Schriften*, Vol. 2 (Augsburg: Dr. Benno Filser-Verlag, 1926), 115, 130, 251. For more background on Pfitzner's book, particularly his argument with Paul Bekker, see Claire Taylor-Jay, *The Artist-Operas of Pfitzner, Krenek, and Hindemith: Politics and the Ideology of the Artist* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2004), 109-10.

[79] 'über sie gibt es keine auf intellektuellem Wege zu erzielende Einigung, man versteht sich in dem durch sie empfundenen Entzücken oder nicht'. 'Was sie ausspricht, ist so tief und so klar, so mystisch und so selbstverständlich wie die Wahrheit': Alban Berg, 'Die musikalishe Impotenz der "neuen Ästhetik" Hans Pfitzners', *Musikblätter der Anbruch*, II Jahrgang, 11-12 (June 1920). Reproduced in Willi Reich, *Alban Berg: mit Bergs eigenen Schriften und Beiträgen von Theodor Wiesengrund-Adorno und Ernst Krenek* (Zürich: H. Reichner, 1937), 181-192, 181; and in the English version as 'The Musical Impotence

ner was a dedicated admirer of Schumann, Berg attempted to prove Pfitzner wrong with a detailed analysis of 'Träumerei' (from *Kinderszenen* (1838)), in which he demonstrated that what sounds like metaphysical depth is always the result of a network of connections, and is, therefore, always amenable to 'intellectual means'.

Berg was surely right about the absurdity of Pfitzner's overall argument, but, brilliant though the commentary on Schumann is, it does not refute the more specific claim he singled out for attention. Berg seems to have lifted his line of reasoning from a well-known essay by Kraus about literature, and an examination of the original quickly exposes where Berg's version falls down. 'The writer has to know all the trains of thought that his work opens up . . . the more the relationships, the greater the art. It is a matter of combining objectivity with background in a single stroke, so that the Idea is a precis of an essay'.[80] By 'Idea' Kraus meant the whole of contemporary humanity's understanding of reality; in loose Hegelian terms it can be glossed as 'what the Subject knows'. The key phrase is 'combing objectivity with background': for Kraus creating great art is not only about the internal connections, but about the connections that reach outwards to the Idea and onwards to material reality. In his attempted rebuttal of Pfitzner, Berg failed to translate the critical part of the argument into musical terms: 'every idea [as a subset of the Idea] is part of the real world. It is distributed into the parts of speech through a prism of quantitative perception'.[81] It was the composer's task to express the real world as mediated through the Idea in the objective forms of music.

There are innumerable ways for the composer to abstract bits of the social world and reflect them back through the interaction of music's different modalities (sonic phenomena like timbre, structure, acoustic space, etc., but also visual and other sensory stimuli that shape the perception of those sounds, like the look of the score, the look of the performance, the location, etc.). As the nineteenth-century discourse surrounding German absolute music shows, one of the elements of the social totality to be incorporated was the new metaphysical reality occasioned by science. Music aspired to emulate the Platonic abstraction of science: the sonata-form movement in particular became a self-contained mini-universe created by the god-like genius composer, and at the same time an organic part of nature able to provide a glimpse into the deep structure of the real universe – the Absolute.[82]

One may object that this romantic conception of music – to be found especially in Schopenhauer and Wagner – was designed to escape science, but their aim was actually to go one better,

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of Hans Pfitzner's "New Aesthetic" ', Cornelius Cardew as *The Life and Work of Alban Berg* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1965), 205-218, 205.

[80] Karl Kraus, *Sprüche und Widersprüche*, reprinted in *Werke*, ed. H. Fischer, Vol. III: *Beim Wort genommen* (Munich: Kösel, 1955), 113. Translation in Alexander Goehr, 'Schoenberg and Karl Kraus: The Idea behind the Music', *Music Analysis*, 4(1/2) (Mar. - Jul., 1985) 59-71; 65.

[81] *Sprüche und Widersprüche*, 111; Goehr, 65. {Check Kraus quote: not clearly referenced in Goehr.}

[82] Following on from Tieck and Wackenroder, E.T.A. Hoffmann, in 'Beethoven's Instrumental Music' (1813) for example, believed that the Beethoven symphony provided 'intimations of the infinite'. E. T. A. Hoffmann, ' "Beethoven's Instrumental Music": Translated from E. T. A. Hoffmann's *Kreisleriana* with an Introductory Note', trans. Arthur Ware Locke, *The Musical Quarterly*, 3(1) (Jan., 1917).

swapping the dry equations yielded by mathematical abstraction for an emotional engagement with Nature itself. Indeed, in the writings of E.T.A. Hoffmann and Wagner, the talk is not of irrationality in opposition to science, but a super-rationality that gets closer to Nature than the mathematical models of science. Echoing similar passages about the underlying organic unity of the Beethovenian symphony in Hoffmann, Wagner wrote:

> [The] changefulness [of the Beethoven symphony] reveals an ordering principle so free and bold, that we can but deem it more forcible than any logic, yet without the laws of logic entering into it in the slightest – nay rather, the reasoning march of Thought, with its track of causes and effects, here finds no sort of foothold. So that this Symphony must positively appear to us a revelation from another world; and in truth it opens out a scheme (*Zusammenhang*) of the world's phenomena quite different from the ordinary logical scheme, and whereof one foremost thing is undeniable – that it thrusts home with the most overwhelming conviction, and guides our Feeling with such a sureness that the logic-mongering Reason is completely routed and disarmed thereby.[83]

The symphony 'reveals' an 'ordering principle' that escapes ordinary *a priori* reason and logic and is therefore able to gesture towards the Kantian unconditioned (*die Unbedingte*), the final inexplicable cause for all those cause-effect systems that can be explained by science. For members of the German absolute-music microculture, symphonic music met its socio-cultural expectations when it generated a perceptual-affective experience that was a plausible representation of the ultimate truth behind contemporaneous scientific understanding. Music that appeared disordered and chaotic on the surface yet was bound together by a deeper underlying structural and motivic unity was the ideal.

As I showed above, the intimate acquaintance with current developments in science displayed by the Romantics was continued in a vitiated form by Berg and Schoenberg. The sheer difficulty of the science in their time meant that they only had a superficial grasp of it, and even then only in severely compromised form. Nevertheless, certain of the features that contemporaries found discomforting about the Schoenberg Circle's music are often the result of a continuing fidelity to the absolute music tradition and particular its link with the metaphysical picture revealed by science. The link suggested between non-Euclidean geometry and non-parallelism above is one example of this. Berg's assertion that metaphysical depth in music is produced by the sort of underlying structural network found in the absolute music tradition has to be seen in this context. There is patterning and structure in all music – often even when the composer has tried to go out of their way to remove all trace of it – and so one cannot simply equate the organic quality of a piece of absolute music with scientificity. However, the sheer surfeit of this dimension of the music, which often has to be balanced – as the quotation of Wagner shows – with the conscious attempt to reintroduce the sort of irregularities found in observed in nature, can. Absolute music, then, was less a glimpse into nature, than an aesthetic rendering of the mathematical perception of nature. Judging a piece of music via its multiple complexes of relations, as

[83] Wagner, 'Zukunftsmusik' [1860], *Wagner's Prose Works*, Vol. III, trans. W. A. Ellis (1907), 317-318.

Berg and other formalists were doing, is not measuring the quality of its musical content per se (although some of the reasons for its per se musicality are bound to come out in an inseparable way too), but gauging its success at rendering the mathematical as an aesthetic experience.

The Musical Unconscious

However, the mathematical did not reside exclusively in the component of music that could be excavated by 'intellectual means'. Schoenberg's brand of Platonic Pythagoreanism had its roots, according to Dahlhaus, in a form of 19th-century Protestantism – an 'anthropocentric' theology – where 'the substance of religion consisted in subjective emotion, which one could then interpret as the guarantee of religious truth'.[84] However, whereas his predecessors had preferred the language of Schopenhauerian metaphysics, Schoenberg expressed his own 'aesthetic theology' through the metaphors of Freudian depth psychology. And, since Freud's conscious/unconscious model of the psyche was already heavily indebted to Schopenhauer's appearance/Will dichotomy, the translation was easily accomplished. Whether the word 'Will' or 'unconscious' was used, the idea remained the same: that it was through the internal experience of one's body (and not via one's sensual perception of the world) that the human mind came closest to the reality of the thing-in-itself.[85] It was thus by channelling the desires that impel the body toward action, Schoenberg thought, that art could best represent not only the physicality that gave rise to them but also, since the material stuff of the universe constitutes the absolute realm, the truth about spirit itself.[86]

Composition, then, had to find some way of harnessing the instinctual drives, and the only way to do that was to ignore the dictates of the rational mind and compose by intuition. In a letter to Kandinsky he accepted the painter's notion of the 'unlogical,' calling it himself the 'elimination of the conscious will in art'. Instead, he went on, 'art belongs to the *unconscious*! One must express oneself! Express oneself *directly*! Not one's taste or one's upbringing, or one's intelligence, knowledge or skill. Not all these *acquired* characteristics, but that which is *inborn*, *instinctive*.'[87] So when setting words, for example, he believed that it was the composer's immediate emotional response to a poem that was most important, not a reasoned determination of the meaning of the text. With the George poems (opp.

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[84] Carl Dahlhaus, 'Schoenberg's Aesthetic Theology', *Schoenberg and the New Music* [*Schönberg und andere*, 1978], trans. Derrick Puffett and Alfred Clayton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 82, 85.

[85] This can be confusing, because expressionism is often seen as an artistic version of Mach's positivism – many Viennese artists, including Hofmannsthal, attended Mach's philosophy lectures. In this case, art is an attempt to reproduce the pre-reflective sensory perception of the world before the mind structures it. There is an overlap, however: since objects appear to the conscious mind already conceptualized (try to see a car as a welter of sense data with its carness subtracted) any such structuring must be unconscious.

[86] This is presumably what he meant by the cryptic aphorism: 'A human being is what he experiences, an artist experiences only what he is'. Arnold Schönberg, 'Aphorismen', *Die Musik*, IX, 21 (1909/10), 162; quoted in English translation in Albrecht Dümling, 'Public Loneliness: Atonality and the Crisis of Subjectivity in Schönberg's Opus 15', *Schönberg and Kandinsky: An Historic Encounter*, ed. Konrad Boehmer, (Amsterdam: Harwood, 1997), 125.

[87] Schoenberg, '[Letter to Kandinsky]', [24 Jan. 1911], 'The Schoenberg-Kandinsky Correspondence', *Arnold Schoenberg, Wassily Kandinsky: Letters, Pictures, and Documents*, ed. Jelena Hahl-Koch and John C. Crawford (London: Faber and Faber, 1984), 23.

10, 14) from their 'sound alone' he had 'completely understood [them] … with a perfection that by analysis and synthesis could hardly have been attained and never surpassed'.[88] Composition was about bypassing the conscious: '[t]o convert an artistic expression into an artistic judgement, one must be practised at interpreting one's own unconscious feelings'.[89] Schoenberg's attempt to pare back the mind until he reached the submerged true self is reminiscent of the Cartesian cogito, even though the repeated emphasis on the expression resulting from the 'unconscious' is clearly meant to distinguish it. In one crucial respect, however, they are the same.

Before Descartes, according to Heidegger, the source of authoritative truth was Church and faith; natural knowledge did not require foundation since its authority was conferred by tradition and its truth guaranteed by revelation. The essence of the mathematical, however, was the 'specific will to a new formation and self-grounding of the form of knowledge as such'.[90] Rather than the world being given and then man finding things out about it, for Descartes a theory of knowledge had to precede the world: 'epistemology' became 'the foundation of philosophy and that [which] distinguishes modern from medieval philosophy'.[91] In order that it might be self-founding mathematical axioms needed to be 'absolutely first, intuitively evident in and of themselves, i.e. absolutely certain'.[92] To obtain this absolute certainty, there needs to be a basic 'principle of all positing'. Galileo's earlier formulation of the First Law demonstrates what this is: 'I think in my mind of something movable that is left entirely to itself …'.[93] The only certainty that Descartes could not doubt, the thinking that constitutes the 'I' of 'I think' becomes the grounding axiom by being 'a proposition that has the peculiarity of first positing that about which it makes an assertion, the *subjectum*'.[94] With this new emphasis on the 'I' of 'I think', 'reason now becomes *explicitly* posited according to its own demand as the first ground of all knowledge and the guideline of the determination of the things'.[95] The deep problem that Heidegger has identified here isn't that mathematics might be wrong – indeed, mathematics is 'unreasonably effective', as we have seen – but that it is guaranteed only by the human mind.

So, and this is the crux of the matter, although Schoenberg denied that his acculturated self (the symbolic 'I' of language) intersected with his artistic subjectivity, he still attributed to his own unconscious the power to divine absolute Truth. Despite denying the 'I', therefore, Schoenberg was still displaying the hubris of the Cartesian 'I think' – the locus of mathematical and scientific truth, the defining feature, according to Heidegger, of rationality. Far from escaping reason, then, Schoenberg's ex-

[88] Arnold Schoenberg, 'The Relation to the Text' [1912], *Style and Idea*, ed. Leonard Stein and trans. Leo Black, (Berkley: California University Press, 1984), 144.
[89] Schoenberg, 'On Music Criticism' [1909], *Style and Idea*, 195.
[90] MMM, 295.
[91] MMM, 298.
[92] MMM, 301.
[93] MMM, 290.
[94] MMM, 302.
[95] MMM, 304.

pressionist music was conceived as a mystico-religious affirmation of its actuating condition, the highest axiom that makes all reason possible.

The embeddedness of the knowing subject within that which it is trying to know is often conceded in later modernist art with conspicuous self-reflexivity.[96] Schoenberg's *Blaue Reiter*-period writings, however, show an artist trying to escape the perceived evils of rationality by producing a pre-reflective engagement with the world. What he ended up doing was *re*-producing a mirror image of the very thing he was trying to escape. Ultimately the 'psychological' element in Schoenberg – and by extension the same in Berg – is as mathematical as the explicit scientificity, or the formalist, structure that Schoenberg is attempting to escape.[97]

The Musical Real

There is a strand in both Schoenberg and Berg's that seems to agree that Pfitzner was right: music does have a theological, universal, or essential quality that defies rational explanation. When Schoenberg later found hidden relationships in his scores that had not occurred to him during the compositional process, he took it as evidence that the music had arisen in his unconscious and was therefore partaking of the Truth.[98] But it was only *evidence* and not *proof* that this has taken place: it is perfectly possible to imagine a piece supremely networked in the ambiguous manner Schoenberg favoured that does not sound musical at all.[99] Berg meant the same thing when he talked of the 'inner processes' as distinct from the 'easier to speak of' 'structural matters'.[100] Dahlhaus cautions that 'it is not the business of a historian to subject the roots of religion in subjective emotion to theological criticism for which he is not qualified'.[101] But actually, there are good material reasons why Schoenberg – and many other composers, besides – have expressed the inspiration for their art in religious terms. This is because the indiscernible essence arises not in some transcendent realm, about whose existence the historian can have no opinion, but in the gap between particular normative and positivist discourses that are fundamentally incompatible.[102]

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[96] René Magritte's painting 'Ceci n'est pas une pipe' (1928-9) is perhaps the archetypal example. Bertold Brecht's *Verfremdungseffekt* which serves to snap the auditor out of their immersion in the play by onstage reference to the play as play is another.

[97] The ability to project the illusion of an individual coherent agent is one of the defining features of music in the bourgeois period – as Scott Burnham points out, the critical discourse on Beethoven keeps returning to the same metaphor: the 'embattled but eventually prevailing subject'. Scott Burnham, *Beethoven Hero* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), xviii.

[98] He describes just this scenario with regards to the Chamber Symphony, Op. 9: 'My Evolution' [1949], *Style and Idea*, 85.

[99] Many have thought that Schoenberg's own music often crosses the line in to unmusicality in just this fashion. For a recent example of a theorist who has attempted to circumscribe in definitive terms what can be considered 'musical' in a way that excludes much of Schoenberg's output, see: Dmitri Tymoczko, *A Geometry of Music: Harmony and Counterpoint in the Extended Common Practice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

[100] Berg to Schoenberg, 9 February 1927 (Open letter dedicating the Chamber Concerto to Schoenberg on his 50th birthday), *The Berg-Schoenberg Correspondence: Selected Letters*, ed. Juliane Brand et al (New York: Norton, 1987), 337.

[101] Dahlhaus, *Schoenberg*, 83.

[102] Of course, contemporary (humanist) history does precisely this, using a sheen of empiricism to prove a point through quasi-mathematical evidence-based argument, when the goal is invariably to support or undermine an ideologically driven normative judgement.

Heidegger's account of science, in which the medieval emphasis on Aristotelian essence, gave way to modern Galilean privilege on Platonic abstraction, has a music-historical version, that can be found in older German textbooks. In the Aristotelian, or Pythagorean view, all music is a demonstration of a timeless musical essence, the universal system of harmonies deriving from the whole-number ratios as discovered by Pythagoras. Musical Platonism supposedly dates from Nikolaus Listenius's concept of the 'Opus perfectum et absolutum' (1537), at a time when a manuscript for Copernicus's *De revolutionibus orbium coelestium* – that necessary precursor of the Galilean revolution – was being distributed and discussed prior to its publication in 1543. It then finally became the chief aesthetic paradigm in the late eighteenth/early nineteenth century during the Enlightenment – with the examples by E.T.A. Hoffmann and Wagner as typical of the trend. In this schema, neo-Pythagoreans like Albert von Thimus (1806-1878) and Hans Kayser (1891-1964), as well as composers they influenced, notably Paul Hindemith, were regarded as 'exceptions', who 'held fast' to the traditions while the rest of history moved on. [103]

More recent German scholarship has challenged this version of events, questioning, for example, whether Listenius's formulation had anything to do with 'absolute music' in the nineteenth-century sense.[104] Having jettisoned a view of music history based on scientific progress, however, it hardly seems right to replace it with one in which science has made everything worse. This is the position taken Suzannah Clark and Alexander Rehding, who describe Descartes *Compendium musicae* (1618) as the beginning of 'the encroachment of acoustical science on music or, to put it conversely from the perspective of music, the reduction of music to quantifiable sound'.[105] If there is any doubt that science is the villain here, they draw on Carolyn Merchant's image of the scientific revolution killing the female goddess *Natura*, transforming her 'from the medieval nurturing womb of which the material world was born, to a corpse on whose body scientific experiments are carried out'. But Descartes's *Compendium* actually marks the point at which science divorced itself from the activity of music creation and consumption. Since this time, science has staked no claim on anything that happens in music production (poetics) or in music reception/theory (aesthetics) – domains where sensible scientific questions are not formulable. Any such ill-advised 'encroachment' has not been undertaken by scientists but by composers and music aestheticians acting in a quasi-scientific manner.

This is important because, even if the Platonic, abstractive principle had completely triumphed over the Aristotelian, essential principle in science, as Heidegger claimed, it could never have done so in music. This is because Pythagoras's insight had nothing to do with the harmony or rationality of na-

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[103] Carl Dahlhaus, *Realism in Nineteenth-Century Music* [*Musikalischer Realismus : zur Musikgeschichte des 19. Jahrhunderts*, 1982], trans. Mary Whittal (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 24. These were not Dahlhaus's ideas, he was merely repeating the accepted view.

[104] Heinz von Loesch, *Der Werkbegriff in der protestantischen Musiktheorie des 16. und 17. Jahrhunderts. Ein Mißverständnis.* (Olms, Hildesheim, Zürich, New York 2001).

[105] Suzannah Clark and Alexander Rehding (eds.), *Music Theory and Natural Order from the Renaissance to the Early Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 6.

ture, and everything to do with human physiology. The qualitative difference between intervals is linked to quantitative features of the acoustic input, but it is only after the acoustic properties are processed by the auditory apparatus that it they are transformed into qualities of the phenomena present in the mind. The consensus in current historical musicology is that what is considered harmonious or dissonant is determined purely by cultural factors. A number of authors use a passage from Helmholtz's famous acoustic treatise to justify this view: 'the construction of scales and harmonic tissues is a product of artistic invention and by no means furnished by the natural formation or natural function of our ear, as has been hitherto generally asserted'. They rarely quote his qualification:

> Of course the laws of the natural function of our ear play a great and influential part in this result; these laws are, as it were, the building stones with which the edifice of our musical system has been erected, and the necessity of accurately understanding the nature of these materials in order to understand the construction of the edifice itself, has been clearly shown by the course of our investigations upon this very subject. But just as people with differently directed tastes can erect extremely different kinds of buildings with the same stones, so also the history of music shows us that the same properties of the human ear could serve as the foundation of very different musical systems.[106]

Certainly, the individual becomes habituated to the musical system he grows up with, and learns to form normative judgements about what sounds good and bad, what gives pleasure, what is uncomfortable, and what counts as music. But, this does not mean that the qualitative features of rhythms, timbres, harmonies do not remain at least relatively stable across musical cultures, and they do this because they must be processed by the same physiological equipment. Since, however, this universal aspect is always articulated through the specificity of a particular musical system, which in turn is articulating a culturally-informed aesthetic, it can only be grasped indirectly through the specific rules (or more properly guidelines) that govern that system.

Thimus and Kayser might be singled out for the overt mysticism of their theories, but not for their Pythagoreanism. Theorists such as Hanslick, who spoke of the 'raw material of nature', or Schenker, whose *Urlinie* articulates the 'chord of nature', or Schoenberg, who derives the basic chords from the harmonic partials in the opening chapter of *Harmonielehre*, all required the Pythagorean insight at the most fundamental level of their theories.[107] They recognized that there is an underlying cognitive universality to the way in which sound and music is processed. However, since it is experienced in the mind and must be expressed through particular historically inherited concepts and is shaped by contemporaneous perceptions of the world, it is itself unknowable.[108] In other words, musical essence,

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[106] Hermann von Helmholtz, *On the Sensations of Tone as a Physiological Basis for the Theory of Music* [*Die Lehre von den Tonempfindungen als physiologische Grundlage für die Theorie der Musik*, 1863] trans. Alexander John Ellis (New York: Dover, 1954), 365-6. (The German edition is available online.)

[107] For Hanslick, what distinguished human music from the 'raw material' supplied by nature was provided by 'mathematics [die Mathematik]': Eduard Hanslick, *On the Musically Beautiful* (*Vom Musikalisch-Schönen*, 1854), Chapter 6: 'Die Beziehungen der Tonkunst zur Natur'. (The full German text is available online.)

[108] This is what Badiou calls 'indiscernibility': *EEE*, 355ff.

which, from its similarity to the Lacanian real, might be called the *musical real*, is defined by a *subtractive* ontology.

Since the musical real is the God of any particular musical system, it cannot be reached, only aimed for; as soon as the infinite aspect is named – as Schenker did with his *Urlinie*, or Schoenberg did with the later 12-tone system – only finitizes it and renders obvious its inadequacy.[109] On the one hand, the composer strives for a faithful representation of some aspect of the aesthetic experience of living in a particular time and place – what Schoenberg and Berg would have thought of in terms of Kraus's Idea. In Schoenberg and Berg's cases this included elements as diverse as the alienation of modern (mathematical) subjectivity and the collapse of the idealist notion of a priori conceptual knowledge. On the other, if the aesthetic content is going to be delivered successfully, must be done in a way that the auditory system can process as music (or as a kind of not-music, if that is what the artistic inspiration demands).[110] The Schoenberg School were attempting to express truths about their cultural reality that marked a radical departure from what had gone before, but at the same time, they were forced to rely on 'intuition', or the soul, in order to find acoustic forms that the auditory system would process as housing that truth. This explains Schoenberg's firm belief that, although he and his pupils were composing by faith, eventually a set of laws would be uncovered to match those of the tonal system.

The musical real – the indiscernible element that any new musical system struggles towards – has its correlates in mathematics and science. Just as Hippasus's fellow Pythagoreans could not accept the existence of irrational numbers (since they had already named numbers as rational), Descartes (and other renaissance mathematicians) refused to believe that numbers like $\sqrt{-1}$, $\sqrt{-2}$, $\sqrt{-3}$ could exist and referred to them as *imaginary numbers*.[111] They could be imagined for the purpose of calculation only, but did not have the ontological status of *real numbers*. In Berg's youth, a similar fierce debate raged about Cantor's transfinite numbers, $\aleph_0$, $\aleph_1$, $\aleph_2$, …, and whether they too were 'real'.[112] As Heidegger's elaboration of the mathematical projection makes clear, all numbers are the product of the human mind, which means that 'real numbers' are no less imaginary than 'imaginary numbers'. But at each stage, the impermissible became the source of creativity and eventually led to an conceptual expansion of what could be considered numerical. I have argued that the absolute music tradition aestheticized the mathematical or Platonic condition of the modern mind by enacting in aesthetic form the

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[109] For Badiou 'naming the unnameable' is a 'disaster', the definition of 'evil': *Theoretical Writings*, ed. and trans. Ray Brasier and Alberto Toscano (London: Routledge, 2004), 118. Herman Broch's more contemporaneous theory of kitsch covers similar ground: 'Das Böse im Wertsystem der Kunst' [1933], *Schriften zur Literatur 2: Theorie* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1975), 119-57.

[110] Composer-theorists after Schoenberg, like Benjamin Boretz and Milton Babbitt, deliberately tried to write mathematically self-enclosed music that ignored the demands of the auditory system altogether, aping David Hilbert's abstraction of geometry. The resulting not-music is still a kind of music, or at least a kind of art. See: James Kenneth Wright, *Schoenberg, Wittgenstein and the Vienna Circle* (Peter Lang, 2007), 120ff.

[111] For these historical reasons $\sqrt{-1}$ is still designated by the letter i and numbers of the form ai, where $a \in \mathbb{R}$, are referred to as *imaginary numbers*.

[112] Even though Cantor secularized the notion of the infinite, by turning it into a bona fide mathematical object, he was still tempted by crypto-theological leanings, rather like Schoenberg: *EEE*, 142-3

two halves of the mathematical: the 'abstractive' (in its impression of autonomy) and the 'axiomatic I' (in its impression of agency). The mathematicity in I.iv does not open up a gap between a secondary scientific mode of understanding and a primary mode of being-in-the-world, as I tentatively suggested above. It cannot do this, since the formal constituent (for which the mathematicity stands) of the music and the psychological constituent are equally mathematical. Instead the mismatch between mathematicity and psychology enacts an aesthetic correlate of the dissonance between these two types of the mathematical that is the necessary prerequisite for any conceptually creative endeavour. A truth process is set in motion when the mathematics (or a particular conceptual regime) conflicts with appearance (what the subject apprehends). Since both arise in the human animal, neither has any warrant to absolute truth, but the rupture between the two allows an intimation of the Truth, and provides the infinite demand through which science takes place.

For the Pythagoreans, intellectual delight had not lost its connection with spiritual release: *theoria* (from *theorio* – 'to behold, to contemplate'; with cognates, *thea* – 'spectacle'; *theoris* – 'spectator, audience') was a kind of *katharsis* with its roots in Orphic ritual in which the mathematician-philosopher experienced religious ecstasy in abstracting pure numerical relationships from the corrupt imperfect world.[113] Mathematical truths were partial glimpses of a mythically revealed harmonious whole existing in the realm of the gods: 'the symbols of mythology and the symbols of mathematical science' could still be seen as 'different aspects of the same reality'.[114] Science could not start, however, until Hippasus's blasphemous discovery, which turned theory from a blissful contemplation of Higher Reality into a model that always fell frustratingly short. The score of *Wozzeck* is supremely successful in generating this Hippasian type of 'theory' as a perceptual effect: that feeling of not-understanding and yet glimpsing the Truth that galvanises mathematicians and scientists. That is why it has seduced so many – including me of course – into attempting to explain it.

* * *

Badiou defines subjectivity as the collective body of thought that accrues as individuals within, for example, the musical world give in to the irresistible demand placed upon them by such ruptures between being (i.e. mathematics) and appearance. The next chapter explores the individual subjective experience of the individual Wozzeck, what its relationship is to science, and how this relates to the broader concern of political subjectivity, particularly as defined in this supra-individual manner.

[113] Koestler, *The Sleepwalkers*, 36-7.
[114] Koestler, *The Sleepwalkers*, 38.

The Utopia of Dangerous Experimentalism

> *An Fortschritt glauben heißt nicht glauben daß ein Fortschritt schon geschehen ist. Das wäre kein Glauben.*
>
> —— Franz Kafka

In the first few minutes of *Wozzeck*, the theme of 'time' is harnessed to two other concepts in a way that will play out in the remaining 90 minutes of a typical performance. The first is 'nature': the Captain's first words, 'Langsam, Wozzeck, langsam!' are preceded by a corruption of the opening gesture of Beethoven's Pastoral symphony. This recovers what would have struck Büchner's intended 1830s audience immediately: the heightened clash between the quickening institutional time of bourgeois production, and the ever lengthening 'deep time' of geology.[1] The Captain is suffering from what could be called the 'chronological sublime': he has seen one too many paintings by Caspar David Friedrich in which the fleeting activity of man is dwarfed by rock formations known to be millions and suspected to be billions of years old: 'Es wird mir ganz angst um die Welt, wenn ich an die Ewigkeit denk'.'[2] In contrast, Wozzeck must rush to complete the three jobs he needs just in order for himself and his family to survive.[3] The second is 'conscience': the Captain again: 'Ein guter Mensch, der sein gutes Gewissen

[1] For a detailed treatment of geological or 'deep time', the time before man existed, in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, see Martin J. S. Rudwick, *Bursting the Limits of Time: The Reconstruction of Geohistory in the Age of Revolution* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

[2] Friedrich's static, monumental style was beginning to go out of fashion when this scene is set (1821), replaced by a more dynamic style that reflected the pace of change brought about by the arrival of the industrial revolution in Germany.

[3] Büchner's political pamphlet 'Der Hessische Landbote' (1834) is considered an important precursor of Marx and Engels's *Manifest der Kommunistischen Partei* (1848); his treatment of time under capital in *Woyzeck* (1836/7) also prefigures Marx's discussion of the working day in Chapter 10 of Volume 1 of *Das Kapital* (1867).

hat, tut alles langsam …..'. Wozzeck's defence uncovers the connection between all three, conscience, time, and nature: if a man must struggle for every penny just to stay alive, he has no time to consider his actions, and must do 'as comes naturally'.[4] After the failure of his youthful attempts at stoking up revolution in his native Darmstadt, and the understanding of nature that his doctorate in anatomy had afforded him, Büchner's *Woyzeck* can be thought of as his confrontation with the limits of conscience – the ability to act 'virtuously', 'morally', 'well' – when faced with the brute reality of time and nature.[5] The developments in physics and biology in the decades between *Woyzeck* and *Wozzeck* meant that what was considered brutally real about time and nature in 1925, when the opera received its premiere, was quite different to what it had been in 1837, when Büchner's untimely death cut short his work on the play.

The claim of this chapter is that the interaction of the new score with the old text goes some way towards re-situating this confrontation within the philosophical debate of the 1920s and 1930s. This is worth doing because, in the absence of any significant aesthetic commentary from Berg himself, his work has suffered from being interpreted in the terms of Schoenberg's *Blaue Reiter* expressionism and Adorno's Freud-infused Hegelianism – and it doesn't sit comfortably with either.[6] Schoenberg and Adorno's utopian visions were grounded in the idealist conception of a free agentive subject: the end of history, the *eschaton*, would arrive when the subject attained absolute freedom, when the will of the individual became identical to the will of the collective.[7] The time spent in the preparation of art was question of conscience: art was obliged to reveal the gulf separating the non-freedom of a reified existence under capital and the lie of freedom promoted by its ideology. The difference between Schoenberg in the 1900s and Adorno's mature philosophy, though, is that, while Schoenberg could still envisage mankind's future reunion with nature, Adorno thought that a Hegelian utopia should already have arrived and, because it hadn't, it now never would. Giorgio Agamben has characterized this feature of Adorno's work as a 'philosophy of impotential': aesthetic beauty aroused a feeling of guilt that was a 'chastisement for philosophy having missed its moment'.[8] Büchner's philosophical notes show him taking a strong line against Kantian and Hegelian conceptions of subjectivity: free will was not prevented

[4] Wozzeck: 'Sehn Sie Herr Hauptmann, Geld, Geld! […] Ja, wenn ich ein Herr wär, und hätt' einen Hut und eine Uhr und ein Augenglas und könnt' vornehm reden, ich wollte schon tugendhaft sein!' In the Büchner fragment, not included by Berg: 'wir gemeine Leut' – das hat keine Tugend; es kommt einem nur so die Natur'. Georg Büchner, *Woyzeck* (H4), *Werke und Briefe*, ed. Karl Pörnbacher *et al* (München: DTV, 1988), 224

[5] Büchner's dissertation, 'Mémoire sur le Système Nerveux du Barbeaux (Cyprinus barbus L.)' (1836), written in political exile in Strasbourg, examined the nervous system of the barbel (a kind of carp) in an attempt to confirm the theory that the fish skull had evolved from its topmost vertebra. It was in the 1830s that artists first started to produce scenes from earlier geological times including images of extinct animals like dinosaurs.

[6] A recent example is Julian Johnson, 'Berg's Operas and the Politics of Subjectivity', *Music, Theatre and Politics in Germany: 1848 to the Third Reich*, ed. Nikolaus Bacht (2006), whose central point I will challenge during the course of the chapter. Berg explicitly eschews a 'philosophical' approach to music in favour of an analytic one in 'Die musikalishe Impotenz der "neuen Ästhetik" Hans Pfitzners', *Musikblätter der Anbruch*, II Jahrgang, 11-12 (June 1920).

[7] Schoenberg preferred neo-romantic images of the individual in harmony with nature, but the structure of his aesthetics is similar.

[8] Giorgio Agamben, *The Time That Remains: A Commentary on the Letter to the Romans* [*Il tempo che resta: Una Commento alla Lettera ai Romani, 2000*], trans. Patricia Dailey (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), 37, 38.

by political and social arrangements, but was already a humanist illusion. According to the view that animates *Woyzeck*, then, Adorno's utopia hadn't arrived because it was never a possibility in the first place. This turns what Schoenberg and Adorno saw as conscience into Nietzschean *Ressentiment*: anger and frustration at something they couldn't change – the intrinsic non-freedom of man – redirected towards what they mistakenly perceived as its source – rationality. Since Berg shared with Büchner a belief in the quasi-redemptive potential of rationality and scientific inquiry, Adorno or Schoenberg are not likely to provide the best means of understanding what is going on in *Wozzeck*.[9] This is confirmed by the fact that, despite its worthy subject matter, a performance of *Wozzeck* is hardly a hair-shirt experience; indeed, it pulsates with just the sort of voluptuous orchestral effects that made Adorno feel so guilty.[10] While the opera might hammer home the fatalist message that rationality would never provide the royal road to a utopian future, I argue that it does still manage to show how science can provide a template for a limited brand of emancipatory politics – one that is more consonant with what might be called the 'philosophy of potential' of Adorno's other teacher, Walter Benjamin.

ZERO HOUR

Wozzeck (1917-22/25) and Benjamin's *Theses on the Philosophy of History* (*Über den Begriff der Geschichte*, 1940/50 – hereafter *TPH*) are zero hour works: acknowledging the full horror of world war but yet still able to project some semblance of hope into the period of renewal that followed. However, it could be argued that it was Büchner who was the true influence on leftist thinkers – most notably Benjamin's friend, the 'Büchneroid' Brecht – and that the opera was just a successful promotional tool for the play.[11] *TPH* represents a bold philosophical experiment that dares to think that political action might still be possible without the dialectic materialist notion of progress. Büchner had already come to the same anti-Hegelian conclusions, which he confronted in *Woyzeck*, making it an important precursor of Benjamin's thought. Berg's reworking of the text and musical overlay, however, focuses attention on this negative aspect, leading to the near unanimous verdict of a 'fatalist' message, with the dominant affect of 'pity' elicited by the anti-hero. If Benjamin had been concerned that vulgar Marxism had turned the present into an 'anteroom' in which one could 'could wait for the emergence of the revolutionary situation with more or less equanimity', then the fatalism of Berg's *Wozzeck* suffers from the opposite problem that, if the poverty and suffering it depicts is inevitable, then the only the only action possible is

[9] Adorno's comparison of *Erwartung* and *Wozzeck* in *The Philosophy of New Music* favours the Schoenberg work because it successfully excludes 'thought' (i.e. reason or rationality): *Philosophy of New Music* [*Philosophie der neuen Musik*, 1949], trans. Robert Hullot-Kentor (Minneapolis: Minnesota UP, 2006), 96.

[10] Adorno had to go through contortions to force *Wozzeck* to fit his ascetic criteria: in spite of the 'timbral fantasy' or the 'striking orchestral effects', 'sound is always secondary, the result of strictly musical-thematic events and derived only from them'. Theodor Adorno, *Alban Berg, Master of the Smallest Link* [1968], trans. Juliane Brand and Christopher Hailey (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

[11] Peter Gay, *Weimar Culture* [1968] (New York and London: W.W. Norton, 2001), 63-5

amelioration of the worst excesses.[12] Büchner was certainly an advocate of pursuing modest achievable reforms in the present, but there is also a sense of hope that animates his work that has somehow been overlooked if it persists in any form in the Berg. If *Wozzeck* does have more political worth than simply eliciting pity for the downtrodden, then it is going to be found in conjunction with this delicate strand in the Büchner original. The point of departure here is a conversation Adorno and Benjamin had after attending the second performance of *Wozzeck* in Berlin, Adorno wrote to Berg: Benjamin 'has a much better idea of what the work is about than any musician'.[13] Taking 'the work' to be *Wozzeck* as a hybrid of spoken theatre and music, the investigation in this chapter designed to reveal is a mode of time perception running through the opera – especially in the three nature scenes, I.ii, III.ii, and III.iv, and elsewhere where nature is referenced – which prefigures Benjamin's 'splinters of Messianic time' that shoot through the 'now-time' [*Jetztzeit*]' and undermines the focus on 'fatalism' and 'pity' that typifies the settled view.[14]

It is not the literary historian's task, according to Benjamin, to 'reduce literature to the material of history', but rather to' represent the age that perceives it – our age – in the age during which it arose'.[15] The reason for returning to *Wozzeck* – which many might think has yielded about all it's going to in terms of critical commentary – is that Büchner and Berg each made conspicuous attempts to mediate between scientific and religious modes of thought, which means it provides a useful way of exploring the relationship between the apparently contradictory theological and naturalist turns taken in critical theory in the past decade or so. The theological side is represented here by Agamben's strong reading of *TPH*, particularly his own version of Messianic time, the 'time that remains', which benefits from the thoroughgoing reappraisal of Hegel that Benjamin never had the opportunity to complete. However, although Agamben's philology is always rigorous, it ignores the complementary focus on materialism that is integral to Benjamin's argument. To be sure, any revolutionary rupture is going to require a reformulation of the relationship between sacred and profane in language. But this underplays (or deliberately excludes) the extent to which metaphysical beliefs – including those that gave rise both to Benjamin's reformulation and Agamben's exegesis – have been shaped by the continuing improvement in the extra-linguistic understanding of the universe and life's place in it supplied by science. This is not to deny that scientific theories bear the mark of their emergence in a particular time and place. Of the two employed here, the language and metaphors of Darwin's *Origin of Species* (1859) owes much to the ideology of laissez-faire capitalism; and physicists' obsession with energy and entropy was guided by

[12] Walter Benjamin, *Selected Writings*, ed. Howard Eiland & Michael W. Jennings, Vol. IV (Cambridge, MA., & London: Harvard University Press, 1991–1999), 402.
[13] Henri Lonitz (ed.), *The Complete Correspondence, 1928-1940* [of Theodore W. Adorno and Walter Benjamin], trans. Nicholas Walker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 120.
[14] Thesis XI.
[15] Walter Benjamin, *The Writer of Modern Life: Essays on Charles Baudelaire*, ed. Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge, MA, 2006), 25. Translation slightly amended.

the desire to make more efficient machinery.[16] However, while no one would claim absolute status for scientific knowledge, it must also be conceded that natural selection and the laws of thermodynamics are true in some way.[17] Quite aside from the pressing ecological imperative to take scientific truth seriously, any social change must exist as a possibility within the physical stuff that the social realm is embedded in. The unchanging and unchangeable material of the universe is a deep problem for revolutionary politics and one that Büchner confronted head on in *Woyzeck*.

Any criticism of 'historical progress' must be based, according to Benjamin, on a critique of the concept of humanity's 'progress through a homogeneous, empty time'.[18] It is not only the 'progress' part of this formulation – the focus of Agamben's study – that is problematic, the idea of 'homogenous, empty time' also needs to be examined. The aim here is to investigate how the different scientific conceptions of time in the 1830s and the 1920s left its mark in each of *Woyzeck* and *Wozzeck*. By exploring the way in which text and music conflate, separate, and reconfigure scientific and theological categories, I argue that, while Berg's music registers the shift from a mechanistic, absolutist, determinist understanding of nature to a stochastic, non-causal, indeterminist one, there is also a dialectical conception of time to be found in Büchner's *Woyzeck* that it preserves and emphasizes. This special type of time is consistent with the thermodynamic model that emerged over the course of the long nineteenth century, but can also be found in the way Pauline eschatology was read by a number of Berg's contemporaries, notably Martin Heidegger, Michael Polanyi as well as Benjamin. It is this utopian-restorative dialectic, which can tentatively be thought of as quasi-universal (in that it has remained stable from Büchner until today), that cuts through the fatalism that dominates *Wozzeck* and justifies Benjamin's hope for a Messianic politics that was capable of redeeming the catastrophes of history.

FIRST SUBJECT

In opposition to the notion of the romantic genius – the *sine qua non* of individual freedom, repeated in Schoenberg's belief that he could channel nature, and Adorno's insistence that authentic art reveal the true material relations of society – Büchner saw the individual as froth atop a wave it could do nothing to control, and greatness, such as artistic mastery, as nothing but mere coincidence.[19] And yet, it is the question of autonomy that is most at stake in readings of *Wozzeck* that focus on pity. At one end of the spectrum, Joseph Kerman thinks that Berg's Wozzeck has no agency, no dramatic presence, and the

[16] Marx was one of the first to point this out about Darwin: Marx to Engels, 19 December 1960, *Marx-Engels-Werke*, Bd. 30, 131. This creates a dangerous feedback loop when specialists speaking outside their field of expertise try to use Darwinian language to claim capitalism is in some way 'natural'.

[17] Here I am following Bruno Latour's call for a more responsible humanities based on 'realism' and 'empiricism': Bruno Latour, 'Why Has Critique Run out of Steam? From Matters of Fact to Matters of Concern', *Critical Inquiry*, 30(2) (Winter 2004), 225-248. The nature of this weasely 'some way' will be clarified below.

[18] Thesis XIII. On how the exigencies of his situation in 1940 caused Benjamin to experiment with definitive formulations that went beyond what his philosophical research allowed, see Peter Osborne, *The Politics of Time: Modernity and Avant-Garde*, (London & New York: Verso, 1995).

[19] 'Der Einzelne nur Schaum auf der Welle, die Große ein bloßer Zufall, die Herrschaft des Genies ein Puppenspiel, […]'. Büchner to Minna Jaeglé [his fiancé], March 1834, Büchner, *Werke*, 288.

extent to which the unearned catharsis near the end of the opera (the D minor peroration between III.iv and III.v) forces us to feel any compassion, it is the pity one feels towards a 'baited animal'.[20] In what seems to be a point by point rebuttal of Kerman's argument, Julian Johnson insists, no less plausibly, that 'the focus of Berg's opera is unequivocally that of Wozzeck as an individual' and finally that *Wozzeck* '[projects] such a deep lament for what [it] narrates […] that the music […] ends up redeeming the brutality of what takes place on stage'.[21]

Charles Taylor has argued that in our current slice of history, stretching from the Enlightenment to the present day, the *expressivist paradigm* of subjectivity has come to dominate.[22] It has two defining qualities: it confers unique individuality; and is the source of volition. Action, speech, artistic creation, and other forms of physical and psychic behaviour, are all then expressions of the inwardness that constitutes this true self. While, as he makes clear, this form of subjectivity is historically contingent and could be overturned, for those situated in it, the individual's sense of their own autonomous self is just as real as the scientific knowledge that shows it to be a lie.[23] That is, those like Kant, Adorno, who argued for agency; and Büchner, Nietzsche, who though it was a fiction, were privileging opposite ends of the same contradiction. I argue in this section that, in Act I, Scene ii, where Wozzeck is collecting sticks with Andres, and its recollection in Act I, Scene iv, in the Doctor's surgery, Berg's music captures the moment at which the fiction of the free self emerges out of non-free awareness. Kerman's 'baited animal' and Johnson's 'individual', then, are two poles of the same experience. The moment at which the fictive self emerges constitutes a weakened form of subjectivity that accords with Benjamin's 'messianic arrest of happening'. If the suspension of time in this manner does indeed represent the opening of a 'revolutionary chance', then the issue of pity turns out to be a distraction from the work's real political animus.[24]

Presence

The question of subjectivity highlights just how mistaken it is to interpret *Wozzeck* through Schoenberg's expressionism, or Adorno's later interpretation of it in *Philosophy of New Music* (*Philosophie der neuen Musik*, 1949). For each, the subject, as the source volition and unique individuality, was simultaneously the vehicle of political resistance and the hope for the utopian future. Since the means available for self-expression had been limited by the evils of reification – materialism, rationalization and commodification – the only possibility was a violent assertion of the free self by a radical negation of all forms of 'thought' in the artwork. For Schoenberg, the degree of discomfort experienced when listening

[20] Joseph Kerman, *Opera as Drama* (New York: Vintage, 1952), 230.
[21] Johnson, 'Politics of Subjectivity', 218, 212.
[22] Charles Taylor, 'Chapter 21: The Expressivist Turn', *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge: CUP, 1992), 368-90.
[23] This includes all our cultural actors, including historians and critics up to 2013, which is why transhistorical, non-metaphysical analysis of this period isn't possible (if it ever is).
[24] Benjamin, *Illuminations*, 254. (Thesis XVII: translation emended)

to his music indexed the extent to which the modern subject was alienated from nature. For Adorno, it marked the distance between Hegelian (absolute) freedom – which the dominant ideology says we have – and the unfreedom that materially obtains. Whether conceived in Adorno's terms as a 'powerless' and 'lonely' subject beneath the 'anxious exterior' or Schoenberg's as an 'inborn, instinctive' soul, perfectly in touch with nature, authentic music conveyed both the stultifying unfreedom imposed by modernity and the residual kernel of freedom of the trapped subject that could serve as the basis of a projected utopia.[25] In compositional practice, the locus of subjectivity turned out to be the singing voice: in *Erwartung* (1909/24) voice and orchestra move as a unity throughout. Adorno's main complaint about *Wozzeck* is that its 'finished structures' act as 'shock absorbers', neutralizing the anxiety that generates the sense of autonomy in *Erwartung*.[26] However diplomatically he tries to phrase it, under these aesthetic criteria, *Wozzeck* is a failure. But, what if Berg had followed Büchner and Nietzsche (with whose work he was much better acquainted) down the anti-idealist path denying the existence of a free subject? This would make sense of the distinct way he handled orchestra and voice.

Consider the second scene of the first act, where Wozzeck is collecting kindling with Andres in the fields outside the town. Like much modern literature, Berg wrote the music of *Wozzeck* from a position of extreme subjectivity, presenting the view from inside Wozzeck's own head to go alongside the objective reality of the staged action.[27] In I.ii, the real-world phenomena Wozzeck observes around him are qualitatively no different to his hallucinations: both emerge from the same eerie nature chords that open the scene, and both use equally convincing musical iconography to depict the content of his experience. The ethereal harmonics on divided strings mimic the nebulous mists floating above the grass where the toadstools are springing up (bb. 227-232) are just as realistic as the depiction in low winds of a disembodied head as it rolls ever faster down the bank (bb. 233-9). [28] In the lead up to the most intense hallucination, the barrier between inner and outer is violated in a more extreme way. Andres's hunting song, which he is singing in a vain attempt to calm Wozzeck down, can be heard simultaneously from an internal Wozzeck-subject position, as if through the distorting prism of his insanity, and from an external objective position (bb. 249-69, particularly 257ff.). The orchestra sets up separate worlds for the two characters, superimposing Wozzeck's vision (or 'audition') onto a warped version of Andres's song, which retains its 6/8 rhythm and semblance of tonality. In *Erwartung*, the integrity of the voice-orchestra complex maintains a coherent self-identity as voice and orchestra lurch from one mood to another according to the internal dictates of the woman. The Wozzeck-subject position, by contrast, is a passive observer of the contingency of the present: not only is his environment is beyond his con-

[25] Schoenberg to Kandinsky, 24 January 1911, 'The Schoenberg-Kandinsky Correspondence', *Arnold Schoenberg, Wassily Kandinsky: Letters, Pictures, and Documents* (London: Faber and Faber, 1984), 23. Theodor W. Adorno, *Philosophy of New Music* [1949] trans. Robert Hullot-Kentor (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), 37.
[26] Adorno, *New Music*, 30-31.
[27] For example, Knut Hamsun's *Hunger* (*Sult*, 1890), a novel Berg praises in a letter to Helena: 25 July 1909, *Briefe an seine Frau*, 89.
[28] Probably a premonition of his own guillotining at the end of the play as Büchner intended it. I give bar numbers for reference, but in this chapter I am concerned mainly with the aural quality of the music.

trol, even his own thoughts fall out of nowhere, unconnected to any sense of 'I'-ness that his voice might represent.

In the scene with the Doctor, I.iv, instead of Schoenberg's attempt to bypass rationality, Berg opens up the distance between internal psychological self constituted by emotional and sensory memory and the social self (the rational self) constituted by linguistic utterance. Again this is done by superimposing non-coincident temporalities. While Wozzeck sputters incoherently, attempting to put into words what he witnessed in the field with Andres, the orchestra supplies atmospheric, timbral and harmonic echoes of the nature music from the earlier scene. (The mood hovers between mystery and terror; the trombones in bb. 532-4 recall those of bb. 225-6; and the nature chords, first heard in b. 201ff., recur in bb. 546-9.) Wozzeck is stymied by his own inability to express in language the content of his sensual experience.

WOZZECK:	Sehn Sie, mit der Natur, … das ist so… wie soll ich denn sagen… zum Beispiel:
DOCTOR:	Wozzeck, Er philosophiert wieder!
WOZZECK:	Wenn die Natur…
DOCTOR:	Was? Wenn die Natur? ...
WOZZECK:	wenn die Natur aus ist, […][29]

According to the layout in the Büchner fragment, the Doctor is interjecting and hurrying Wozzeck along as he struggles to find the right word. Berg, however, superimposes the Doctor's lines onto Wozzeck's continuing speech, and uses several devices to separate both voices out into their own worlds. They both sit at opposite ends of the baritone range, with the Doctor at the bottom shadowed below by the tuba, and Wozzeck at the top accompanied above by a blurred elaboration of his line in winds and solo violin. Wozzeck has a free recitative style where the stresses fall at different places in the 6/8 bar, although often on the 3rd and 6th quavers. The Doctor cuts across this in more of a 3/4 rhythm. The most remarkable thing is that the Doctor's line is much slower than Wozzeck's, even though, when one imagines the conversation from the text alone, he would speak faster. This is also true when he says 'Was? Wenn die Natur?' in order hurry Wozzeck up, but on this occasion, when he is losing patience and they are emotionally further apart, he has the same notes at the same speed as Wozzeck, creating the equivalent of a double exposure photograph in sound.

If the true self of the expressivist paradigm is indeed an illusion, then it surely arises in the process of linguistic self-expression that is arrested in the case of Wozzeck. Nietzsche argued that the self-identical, agentive, juridically responsible Kantian subject owes its existence to the 'seduction of language (and the fundamental errors of reason petrified in it)'.[30] The error is that language 'conceives

[29] Landau took the first two lines from fragment H4 and the next three from H2, with some emendation/misreading: Büchner, *Werke*, 226, 214.

[30] Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil* [1887], *Basic Writings of Nietzsche*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: The Modern Library, 2000), 480. (Essay I, Section 13)

and misconceives all effects as conditioned by something that causes effects', so that the 'driving, willing, effecting' that are the expression of 'desire' are attributed to a cause, the driving, willing, effecting 'subject'. This fictional entity doubles the deed: 'There is no "being" behind doing, effecting, becoming; "the doer" [i.e. the subject] is merely a fiction added to the deed – the deed is everything'. The human being is only what it does; there is no free agent inside that may be held accountable for those actions: actions emanate from the human in exactly the same way as they do from the natural world: attributing agency to human action is like holding a lightning strike personally responsible for setting fire to the barn.[31] In the moments where Wozzeck struggles to force thought, experience or memory into the narrow constraints of language, so that he might enter the symbolic order, his linguistic 'I', the illusory subject, does not materialize. But, his inability to take his place as a nominally free agent makes him aware that 'he' is only the impotent awareness trapped inside a chunk of the universe's physical matter, Büchner's foam atop a wave.

Agamben's first definition of Messianic time is the sense of ourselves that emerges in between the immediacy of experience (or its memory) and the expression of that experience in language. Since speech necessarily happens after thought, language forces us apart from ourselves and renders us 'impotent spectators of ourselves'. The instant between thought and word is 'the time that we ourselves are […] the only time we have'. [32] For Wozzeck, when expression is damned up, this ordinarily fleeting sensation of subject formation is prolonged – as the slowing down of his *own* time indicates – meaning that he is aware of himself as a self (however fictional it might really be) in a more acute manner than usual. Thus, the desubjectifying exclusion, brought about by his linguistic incompetence, offers him a more intense experience of self, a subjectivity of presence.

Universal Man

By expanding Büchner's realism to incorporate the psychological process of subject formation, Berg was reinforcing Büchner's antidote to the mistaken faith in autonomy, an unwavering fidelity to 'life' itself.[33] Rather than having the arrogance to think he knew how the world 'should be', the writer's duty was to represent the world 'as it is'. This meant presenting human beings whose 'sorrows and joys' can be 'shared emotionally', whether their deeds fill one with 'revulsion or admiration'.[34] Büchner was importing the Baconian method into his aesthetics: there are no *a priori* facts in science – *hypotheses non fingo*, as Newton famously put it – there are only empirical observations from which a guess at the gen-

[31] In the Aristotelian view of the universe, which held sway for much of the middle ages, inanimate objects, like a stone rolling down a hill, did require a 'quasi-sentient' mover in order to get from 'potency' to 'act'. Arthur Koestler suggests that the tendency to infer agency in any moving object, let alone animals, other human beings or our own self, is one of the 'deeper, primordial responses of the mind'. See Arthur Koestler, *The Sleepwalkers: A History of Man's Changing Vision of the Universe* [1959] (London: Peregrine, 1968), 112-3.
[32] Agamben, *Time that Remains*, 68.
[33] Thesis XIII.
[34] The Idealists have not produced 'Menschen von Fleisch und Blut', 'deren Leid und Freude mich mitempfinden macht, und deren Tun und Handeln mir Abscheu oder Bewunderung einflößt.': letter to his family, 28 July 1835, *Werke* , 305-307.

eral principle can be inducted. For Büchner, the primal law of nature, the *Urgesetz*, was and would remain radically unknowable, so the closest science or art could get to representing its truth was through a commitment to faithful observation. To be sure, the scientist's choice about what to record is guided by his or her theory, and the slivers of human life in *Woyzeck* – as accurate as anatomical sketches – invite the audience to extract the general from the human specimens on show. By holding Woyzeck up to each of his social superiors, Büchner was demonstrating that the veneer of education, civilization, morality is never enough to mask the animal beneath. The Captain, chastening Woyzeck for his fathering a bastard child, admits that he too is aroused by the sight of girls' white stockings as they skip down the street after the rain.[35] And the Doctor only caught Woyzeck answering his 'call of nature' in the street because he had leaned out of the window to sneeze.[36] The Drum Major might initially impress Woyzeck's partner Marie with his uniform, but it is his physical stature, his 'chest like a lion' that allows him to take possession of her and 'breed like rabbits'. It becomes clear that Woyzeck is being examined as a candidate for the archetypal human animal – the *Ur*-human.

Berg admired Wagner over Schopenhauer because, like Nietzsche, he said 'yes' to life.[37] But one of the pessimistic, no-to-life, aspects of Schopenhauer, which Nietzsche repeatedly attacked, was a morality based on pity/compassion (*Mitleid*).[38] For Schopenhauer, the truly moral act – that is, one not undertaken for personal or selfish reasons – arises from recognizing the self in the other. But this is not what Büchner was encouraging his audience to feel about Woyzeck – in fact, quite the opposite. In his desire to make his projected audience face up to some uncomfortable truths about the human animal, Büchner is presaging Nietzsche. In *Beyond Good and Evil* (*Jenseits Gut und Böse*, 1886), he maintained that it was not only the establishment that benefited from the fiction of the subject, the 'oppressed, downtrodden, outraged', men like Wozzeck in fact, '[*needed*] to believe in a neutral independent "subject" '.[39] This was because 'the subject (or […] the *soul*) […] makes possible to the majority of mortals, the weak and the oppressed of every kind, the sublime self-deception that interprets weakness as freedom, and their being such-and-such as a *merit'*.[40] Individuation gives those who are prevented by the strong from discharging their will a sense of value. It is this false valuation that Johnson has mistaken for an assertion of authentic subjectivity in the lyrical moments of the opera. He argues that Berg 'constructs subjectivity not simply as the victim of social conditions but as a force of resistance to them' and that subjectivity is therefore 'the strongest and most profound political gesture of Berg's operas'.[41] The moments of lyricism do not demonstrate the 'freedom and autonomy' that Johnson claims,

[35] In Landau, but cut by Berg: H4, *Werke*, 224.
[36] Not in Landau: H4, *Werke*, 226.
[37] Wagner outgrew his teacher Schopenhauer by embracing a more modern, more optimistic outlook: 30 July 1908, *Briefe an seine Frau*.
[38] The translation issues here are complicated since *Mitleid* is translated as 'compassion' by Schopenhauer's translators and 'pity' by Nietzsche's.
[39] Nietzsche, *Good and Evil*, 482.
[40] Translation slightly emended.
[41] Johnson, 'Politics of Subjectivity', 230.

but rather what Nietzsche calls the 'counterfeit and self-deception of impotence', 'as if the weakness of the weak – that is to say, their *essence*, their effects, their sole ineluctable, irremovable reality – were a voluntary achievement, willed, chosen, a *deed*, a *meritorious* act'. Wozzeck's lyricism – in his quasi-aria 'Wir arme Leut!', Johnson's example – asserts nothing other than his own suffering. If Adorno was right that Berg's music expresses his 'unfettered pity' for the protagonist, then it is this aspect of the score that – from a political point of view – ought to be seen as a failure.[42] Büchner thought that the contingency of the individual's existence – powerful or weak – was an 'iron law' that could only be 'recognized, but never mastered': it is a brute fact about the *Ur*-human, shared by all, and beyond the need for pity.[43] This is not Schopenhauer's morality of universal dignity, where the self recognizes that the other shares its sense of intrinsic value, but one of universal abjectness, where one recognizes the abject other in the self.

There is an important consequence of Woyzeck's abjection in the Büchner play, although partially obscured by Berg's cuts in the opera. When, after his stuttering, he finally manages to find the words to communicate something to the Doctor, it is his intuition that there is something more to nature than meets the eye, that there is a nature behind the nature he can see.[44] Woyzeck's reduced mental state – the insanity brought on by his diet of peas – is allowing him to see through to the *Urgesetz*. Only 22 years before Darwin's *Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection* (1859), Büchner is allowing his protagonist visions of a principle that he himself only has a vague notion of, and cannot yet be formulated using the conceptual apparatus available to him.[45] Woyzeck's abjection turns him into the ideal scientist: unencumbered by the preformed concepts that channel the Doctor's thought – 'Er hat die schönste *Aberratio mentalis partialis*, die zweite Spezies …' – he has an open enough mind to receive truth that exceeds the language he has at his disposal. As *Ur*-human, the character Woyzeck – and in a vitiated way, Wozzeck – confronts its audience with their own weakness in the face of physical and biological forces they can do nothing about. The self-recognition that this ought to provoke is the first step towards the abject state of mind necessary to receive truth. Woyzeck's achievement of this state, therefore, is something to be emulated not pitied.

[42] 'fessellos Mitleid': Adorno, *Alban Berg: Der Meister des kleinstens Übergangs* [1968] in *Die musikalischen Monographieren* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1986), 434.
[43] Individuality is 'ein lächerliches Ringen gegen ein ehernes Gesetz, es zu erkennen das Höchste, es zu beherrschen unmöglich': Büchner, *Werke*, 288.
[44] In a line Berg cut, Woyzeck asks 'haben Sie schon was von der doppelten Natur gesehen?': H4, *Werke*, 226.
[45] In his inaugural lecture at Zurich University, Büchner suggested that the 'intuition of the mystic' was one way in which truth about nature could be ascertained: 'Über die Schädelnerven' (1836), *Werke*, 259-269.

SECOND NATURE

Part of the blame for blame for the shift of emphasis towards pity in *Wozzeck* must lie with the edition Berg was using.[46] Following Landau, Berg's Wozzeck puts Marie to death with one swift knife-stroke to the throat, an action he was able to indicate precisely in the score with an arrow over the exact semi-quaver triplet when it occurs. Büchner's murder scene, however, does not shirk from exposing the full horror of the murder: after an initial frenzied attack, 'Nimm das und das! Kannst du nict sterbe. So! So!', he is forced to continue stabbing by the gruesome sight of her still twitching body, 'Ha sie zuckt noch, noch nicht noch nicht? Immer noch? (*stößt zu*) Bist du tot? Tot! Tot!', the repeated syllables echoing the action of the knife.[47] This makes the murder in the play more difficult to forgive than in the opera. It is doubly so, because Berg turned the previous scene – III.i, Marie alone with the child in their room – into a confessional, where she asks for God's forgiveness. Büchner's Marie is much less of an insipid victim: despite her admission of sin, and her genuine contrition, she can't in good conscience ask for forgiveness because she knows very well her bestial sexual appetite will result in further infidelity. In the Christian moral economy, then, Woyzeck's murder sends her directly to hell. In Berg's subtle alteration of the text she does complete the ritual of absolution, and so the less violent, almost clinical despatch could be seen as an act of mercy, releasing her from suffering. Considering the words and action only, the opera seems to compromise Büchner's exposition of the challenge marginal cases such as Woyzeck's present to the law: Marie and Woyzeck are both incontrovertibly guilty and yet, given a complete understanding of their circumstances, ought they to be forgiven? In this section, however, I show that Berg's musical treatment of the murder reattaches inescapable guilt to Wozzeck in a different and unexpected way.

Entropy

In order to do this, it is first necessary to make a new interpretation of a familiar aspect of Berg's compositional style. There are various types of non-movement in the music of *Wozzeck* – cycles, palindromes and stasis – that have been the subject of much hermeneutic debate. In a survey of the English and German literature, Douglas Jarman has weighed up the various hypotheses on the origin of the palindrome in Berg's oeuvre.[48] (As he points out, Berg's palindromes rarely occur without extra-musical meaning.) He is right to make a distinction between the palindrome proper, where a stretch of music occurs forwards and then backwards about a central axis, and Berg's frequent cyclic organization of

[46] It is as well not to be too harsh on Franzos, who read the fragments for the Landau edition: the manuscripts were so degraded that it took years of painstaking philological work before the best-guess performing versions were put together in the 1980s. (Although it is possible that this particular change was made for reasons of audience sensitivity.)

[47] Büchner, *Woyzeck*: H1, *Werke*, 205. Büchner drew on the forensic reports of a number of murder cases, including that of J.C. Woyzeck, and so he would have been well aware that multiple stabbings are the norm in male attacks on female victims.

[48] Douglas Jarman, ' "Remembrance of things that are to come": Some Reflections on Berg's Palindromes', *Alban Berg and his World*, ed. Christopher Hailey (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton UP, 2010), 195-221.

musical material: both usually mean different things in context.[49] Nevertheless, when it comes to *Wozzeck*, Jarman still resorts in the end to equating stasis/circularity/reflective symmetry with 'fatalism'.[50] Unlike *Lulu*, whose whole musical structure turns on the palindrome in the middle of the middle act, genuine palindromes are thin on the ground in *Wozzeck*. When they do occur – as in the tiny one-word Variation 7 of I.iv – they are used to signify despair: events happen and then they are immediately swallowed up again by the continuum. However, in the three scenes set outside the town in the countryside, II.ii, III.ii and III.iv, Berg uses some form of musical stasis to represent the equilibrium of nature against which snippets of palindrome-like material unfold. While they do not exhibit the strict reversal of time values and pitches to be found in the slow movement of the Chamber Concerto, for example, these snippets do possess the aural quality of sound that doubles back on itself – something not always evident in palindromes proper. In the negotiation between motion and non-motion in these passages resides a less fatalistic strand of the opera.

The key to understanding this is to get the source of the static-circular-reflective music right. Commentators approaching the topic from a philosophical point of view have identified the ideas of Swedenborg as reflected through Balzac's *Séraphita* (1834);[51] the quasi-scientific number cycles in theosophy;[52] Nietzsche's 'Eternal Recurrence';[53] Bergson's questioning the nature of objective time; and the numerous experimental psychologists at the end of the nineteenth century who were investigating the experience of subjective time.[54] Others have suggested that a number of recent inventions had resulted in an openness to the reversibility of time: Edison's lightbulb (1879), through which night could be experienced as day; and the cinema, where it is possible to stop or reverse time at will.[55] (Cinema was an obvious influence on *Lulu*.) Jarman's only potential scientific influence is Einstein's Special Theory of Relativity (1905) – but he dismisses this because of it appeared later than the other examples and, he claims, hadn't achieved the cultural penetration of the other sources. This is moot, but in any case, even though the theory doesn't specifically preclude time-reversal, it is about relative time and nothing to do with cyclical time.[56]

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[49] Robert P. Morgan does this in 'The Eternal Return: Retrograde and Circular Form in Berg', *Alban Berg: Historical and Analytical Perspectives*, ed. David Gable and Robert P. Morgan (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1991).
[50] For Jarman there is no hope of the characters in *Wozzeck* ever reaching 'a level of consciousness that [makes] possible the recognition of potential for change', and so they are doomed to remain trapped in their 'tragic cycle'. Jarman, 'Berg's Palindromes', 218. See also p. 216 for his identification of palindromes with fatalism in Berg's oeuvre as a whole.
[51] John Covach, 'Balzacian Mysticism, Palindromic Design and Heavenly Time in Berg's Music', *Encrypted Messages in Alban Berg's Music*, ed. Siglind Bruhn (New York: Garland Publishing, 1998), 5-29.
[52] Wolfgang Gratzer, *Zur "wunderlichen Mystik" Alban Bergs* (Vienna-Cologne-Weimar: Böhlau Verlag, 1993). See Chapter 2 for further discussion of this subject.
[53] Robert P. Morgan, 'The Eternal Return'.
[54] Stephen Kern, *The Culture of Time and Space 1880-1918* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2003).
[55] Both examples in Kern.
[56] Albert Einstein, *Relativity* [1915], trans. Robert W. Lawson (London: Routledge, 2001).

The most concentrated expression of the sort of circularity Berg was using in *Wozzeck* was University of Vienna physicist Ludwig Boltzmann's equation for entropy: $S = k \log W$ (1871).[57] The word 'entropy' (*Entropie* = Greek *en* + *tropē*, transformation) was deliberately coined to sound like 'energy' (*Energie*) and is the amount of useless energy in a system – the energy that is unavailable to do work and a measure of the disorder of a system. Boltzmann's equation is a mathematical description of the Second Law of Thermodynamics which says that the amount of entropy in a closed system increases over time; or, the amount of disorder increases over time; or, any system tends towards equilibrium. It was shocking for two reasons. Firstly, it is stochastic (it relies on the calculation of probabilities) at a time when physics was supposed to supply absolute descriptions. Secondly, *it has no variable for time.* It doesn't actually prove the classical statement of the Second Law of Thermodynamics, instead it says that a higher entropy state is more likely to occur than a low entropy state and so, moving forwards *or backwards* in time, the amount of disorder will increase. Given a large enough system like the universe and the stability of some high order configurations, it is inevitable (strictly speaking, very, very probable) that local spots of order will arise. The picture, then, is not of inevitable decay, but of order arising out of chaos and then decaying back to a state of chaos again – a picture captured perfectly by Berg's symmetrical structures. So although the stasis-movement trope is used to articulate the psychological curve of the nature scenes in Wozzeck, it is also communicating what had by this time been elevated to generally held metaphysical assumption about the universe. Namely, that nature was not only beneficent and fecund, but simultaneously radically hostile to life.

The Sound of Nature

The musical form of Act III, scene ii, in which Wozzeck slits Marie's throat, was described by Berg as an 'Invention on One Note'.[58] Berg hardly altered the text for this scene from the Franzos edition of the play he was using, and the music follows Büchner's psychologically astute pacing.[59] The note *b*, which forms one half of the dyadic key centre of the work, *b-f*, is called on to do a lot of work in this scene.[60] It represents not only the stillness or repose of the surrounding nature, particularly the stillness of the evening air, the surface of the pond, and the moonlight; but emotionally, it also represents fear, particularly terror and dread; and psychologically, it represents the knife to which Wozzeck's mind keeps returning. In the interlude that follows the scene, which comprises a tutti sustained *b*, it represents the

[57] *S* is the entropy, *k* is a constant and *W* is the number of arrangements of molecules that can give rise the state one is observing. Put simply, the more arrangements that can give the state observed, the more probable it is and so the more stable it is. The equation was the culmination of the work James Clerk-Maxwell began on a statistical (kinetic) theory of gases in 1859.

[58] Alban Berg, 'Die Musikalischen Formen in meiner Oper *Wozzeck*', *Die Musik* 16(8) (May 1924), 587-89.

[59] For a discussion of Berg's minor alterations see George Perle, *The Operas of Alban Berg:* Wozzeck (Berkeley: California UP, 1980), 81-2.

[60] Josef-Horst Lederer, gives numerous examples of how the note *b* or or the key of b minor is often found in association with fatalism, irony, the demonic, the uncanny, etc. In Wagner, for Hagen, Alberich and Klingsor it corresponds to murder, curses and revenge respectively. In *Wozzeck* it is a 'symbol of death': 'Zu Alban Bergs Invention über den Ton *H*', *50 Jahre* Wozzeck *von Alban Berg*, ed. Harald Goertz, Otto Kolleritsch, et al, (Graz: Universal Edition, 1978), 57-67; 57-9.

boring of the knife through flesh itself, imparting the full chilling horror of what has been witnessed to the audience. Berg's use of stasis in all three nature scenes draws on a tradition of depicting nature in music as unchanging. It has the following structure (numbers in brackets refer to bar numbers; superscripts refer to beat 1, 2, 3 of the 3/2 bar, or 1, 2 of 6/4).

(3/2: 73-80^{1}) Wozzeck guides Marie along the forest path; Marie senses something is wrong and wants to leave. The scene is set musically with a distorted pastoral topos in e-flat clarinet (74), continued in horns and flutes (75-6), which resembles the finale theme of Beethoven's 'Pastoral'. (The first bar of Act I, scene i has a misquotation of the first movement of the same symphony.) The low trombone, contrabassoon *b*s, with their growling swells contribute further to the forbidding atmosphere. The bassoon trills (77) recall the trills of the winter music in Mahler 3.

(80^{2}-85^{1}) Wozzeck attempts to start a state-of-the-relationship discussion. This acts as a transition into the next section. The syncopated high solo violin harmonics (80-2) this time recall Mahler 1.

(85^{2}-91^{1}) Wozzeck imagines the way he wishes the relationship could be. This is a moment of repose: the *b* now in high tremolando strings drifts out of aural consciousness so that the tension is almost forgotten.

(91^{1}-96) But … it can't be. The false calm is ended by the 'etwas hastig' entry of the three horns (91), which turns the dread of the opening into terror. This is intensified by the clarinet, trumpet and flute flutter-tonguing on the *b*, and the xylophone hitting a dissonant *c* against it to represent Marie's shivering.

(Between 96 and 97) A moment of silence after Wozzeck says 'nix' – nothing. It has two meanings: it is a reply to Marie's question 'Was sagst Du da'; but it is also that Marie will not feel the cold tomorrow because she will feel, will be, nothing. In the context then, nothing means the absence of life. The silence is marked as such in the score 'langes Schweigen' – not a pause in the music but nothingness. The way the nothingness is approached is important too: Wozzeck's 'nix' is on a *b* – now the only b, but he whispers the word, and its sound is meant to emerge out of the sound of the bass clarinet (the vocal line is marked '*die Bs Klar fortsetzend*'). The b is thus shown to be an aural stand-in for nothingness, tying the *b* explicitly to the idea of not-life or entropy. This silence is not another moment of calm before the violent murder – this is the most terrifying moment in the opera.

(6/4: 97-100) A blood-red moon appears from behind a cloud. The pianissimo *b* in strings in seven octaves combined with a four part canon in trombones has an uncanny sonority due to the strong assertion of a b-centred tonality being undercut by the atonality of the brass: each of the four lines going through a cycle of the other 11 notes of the chromatic scale. This is another point of repose, but this time there is no possibility of forgetting the situation.

(101-106^{2}) The murder. That Marie's life flashes before her ears in leitmotivic form is well known – it is like a telescoped version of Siegfried's funeral march, where the story of his life is told synoptically through leitmotif. The build-up, stabbing and death is driven forward by the pounding *b* in the timpani. It also sets up a point of reference against which the fragmented irregularity of the action sounds all the more disturbing. As Marie sinks to her death and the tension quickly subsides it also disrupts the standard flow of time. There is a ritard slowing down the beat, and the timpani crotchet *b*s with it (95), but the woodwind motif here only lasts 3 semiquavers. The result is that the tempo appears to be slowing down and speeding up at the same time – a disconcerting effect that is compounded by the syncopated 'ach Marie!' motif in the strings.

(106^{2}-108) Death. The *a*-*e* string fifths seem to bring the scene to some sort of resolution, but the *b* continues on, unresolved. (It does eventually resolve onto a warped C major in the next scene, which makes sense of the shadow of a ♯ – V^{7} progression during the nearly tonal music in bb. 86-89).

The dynamism, the moments of repose, anticipation and graded tension all arise from the stretching, distorting, folding and relaxing the sonic fabric against the static pedal point *b* – all except, that is, for the silence which grows directly out of it.

It is worth looking at one of the passages in more detail: the point of repose (85-91). The heavenly upward sweep in the harps and celeste of the lead in prepares the listener to be transported into another world. And the music that follows can be thought of as Wozzeck's reply to Marie's transcendent F minor variation in the previous scene (33-39). This self-contained affective world unfurls from the *b*, attempting to move away from it but always feeling its pull, as if connected to it by a rubber cord. After having made the jittery Marie sit back down, wishes that there could be more affection between them. 'Was Du für süße Lippen hast, Marie! Den Himmel gäb' ich drum und die Seligkeit, wenn ich Dich noch oft so küssen dürft!' The line is accompanied by a trio of solo violas which uncloak softly from the void, swell into a touching climax and then fade out again. In the bar leading up to the climax, six solo wind instruments enter one by one and then drop out again in a similar fashion in the following bar. Each part (the wind parts double the three viola parts) hovers around the a *b*, or oscillates between two *b*s an octave apart. In an atonal context where appropriately scored tonal music sounds otherworldly, this almost-but-not-quite transcendent quality has been achieved by careful control of the harmony. Most of the chords, especially in the first few bars, are tonal – there are a lot of major and diminished triads in particular – but they are put together so that no key is fully established. And, although the contrapuntal lines here do contain the occasional note *b*, there are no E, G, B major, e, g# or b minor chords in the whole passage – so that the pedal, although constantly sounding, never has the chance to become ensconced in a particular tonality. The music never attains that celestial otherness heard in Marie's F minor variation.

The way the music for the whole scene takes place against or in spite of the indifferent nothingness of Nature is given its most moving expression at the end when Marie dies. The interval of a fifth that offers a sort of resolution turns out to be false as it too dissolves back into the *b*, which continues to sound. Berg has written 'quasi Tempo I' acknowledging the fact that Nature remains wholly unchanged in its primal state of stability.

Cosmic Payback

It is at this moment of non-resolution that Wozzeck's permanent guilt becomes most painfully clear. However the guilt in the Büchner original and in the Berg opera stem from the different metaphysical structures they were working within. The a 'primal law' or a 'law of beauty' that Büchner thought was exhibited by all living things ties him to the *romantische Naturphilosophie* of Goethe, Fichte, Schelling and his own anatomical work is similar to Goethe's theories about the *Urpflanz*.[61] In what can be

[61] It was perfectly consistent for Büchner to argue against idealism in art and yet draw scientific inspiration from philosophers we now also class as idealist. The distinction is that, where as Kant and his followers had tried to derive the real from the ideal (and in which bracket Büchner also placed Schiller), Goethe tried to discern the ideal in the real. As Büchner states in

broadly characterized as an 'organicist' mode, these thinkers argued that all matter, living or not, was an expression of one unified primal energy. Scientist from the late seventeenth century on had been aware of entropy in some form – for instance, heat lost through friction – but within romantic natural philosophy, there was a balance between expansive and contractive forces.[62] Evolution, for Büchner, might not have been teleological, in the sense that the forms of life that actually occurred were inevitable, but there was a guiding principle to its unfolding in which growth and death both had their part to play. On the other hand, however, as can be seen from his personal writing and in his notes for his philosophy lectures, he also seems to have subscribed to a Laplacean view of a mechanistic universe.[63] This made him sceptical about the claim that the evolution of the solar system (first proposed with any sophistication by Kant in *Universal Natural History and Theory of Heaven* (*Allgemeine Naturgeschichte und Theorie des Himmels*, 1755)), then the evolution of life on earth, could (or would automatically) be succeeded by a corresponding social evolution. As part of a mechanistic universe, human thought – and particularly the new scientific-technological breakthroughs – could never result in action that would bring about a period of sustained, self-directed evolution. Büchner's guilt, then, is the gulf, therefore, between the primordial law that can be intimated and the knowledge that no amount of human effort can ever bring it about. In theological terms, it is equivalent to Augustine original sin, man can never meet the infinite demand placed on him by his perfect creator and so the stain of guilt is a permanent condition. Büchner's realism is a reflection of this: witnessing the ideal quality of the law of Beauty in the depravity of actual life – as opposed to an attempt to reproduce the ideal itself – results in an aesthetic of guilt.

But the guilt that Berg attaches to Wozzeck, especially in the murder scene, seems to be something even more terrible than the inability to reach a certain predetermined (if unknowable, unimaginable etc.) state of perfection. The scene identifies musical stasis, the standard way of signifying Nature, with equilibrium, the undifferentiated mass of stuff in the universe, or nothingness/not-life. The idea of musical motion emerging and then returning to stasis – of which the palindrome is just one example – can be equated with the chance emergence of order and then its entropic tendency to return to a more stable state of disorder. Nature, both in *Wozzeck*-world and in the real world according to contemporary physics, is a background fog of indeterminate nothingness. Physical laws only emerge statistically: events are not the product of some final cause (God, or some secular/scientific replacement

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the Zurich lecture, the *Urgesetz* (the ideal) is something that can be intuited, but is and will remain unknown to science – hence his insistence on accurate reproduction of observed reality. See Fredrich Beiser, 'The Enlightenment and Idealism', *The Cambridge Companion to German Idealism*, ed. Karl Ameriks (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 18-36.

[62] When the post-structuralists (and their followers) railed against Hegelian teleology and organicism, they were, as is now accepted, actually critiquing the much weaker Soviet-inspired version of Hegel popularised by Alexander Kojève in his 1933-39 Paris lecture course. Organicism was a much more subtle analytic than the 'totalizing', 'teleological' caricature.

[63] Laplace's view can be taken as typical of most (what we would now call) physicists of the time: 'We ought to regard the present state of the universe as the effect of its anterior state and of the cause of the one to follow': *A Philosophical Essay on Probabilities* [1814], trans. Frederick Wilson Truscott and Frederick Lincoln Emory (New York: Dover, 1951), 4. This famous passage gave rise to the well-known idea of 'Laplace's Demon' who can predict and retrodict every event from the beginning until the end of time.

like the *Unbedingte* or the *Urgesetz*) but are the result of efficient causes only. Life does not arise thanks to some semi-mystical force, but as the result of numerous highly unlikely accidents. Further, because life is a highly complex and ordered state, nature is radically inimical to it, continually trying to claw it back into the indeterminate nothingness from which it came.

Wozzeck's living presence is shown – in those moments after Marie has expired – to be a temporary aberration, energy or time stolen from the void and constitutive of an existential debt that can never be repaid.[64]

In the Pauline-Augustinian Christian tradition, God's grace – undeserved love – is required for the individual to pay their debt and for them to be allowed to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. It is no coincidence, then, that Berg reserves single-key, triadic tonality – the antithesis of the horizontal and vertical symmetries of the nature music – for those fleeting moments of transcendent, unconditional love: the c major chord in II.i when Wozzeck drops off the money earned out of love for his family; Marie's love for her child expressed in the heartrending fifth variation of III.i. Both of these scenes highlight Marie's guilt. The near miss of the three violas in their attempt to achieve tonality in the passage preceding the murder, marks the of Wozzeck's inability to muster up enough love to forgive her. She is in his eyes, just as life looks from the point of view of the void, irredeemable.

A DANGEROUS PRIVILEGE

Odd though it may seem, I am arguing that, despite Wozzeck's inhabiting Büchner's intricately crafted dystopia, he is still finds a way of living utopically. How can this be? Utopia need not be an external set of social conditions – actually existing or aspired to – but might also an attitude the individual takes or a way of experiencing the present. As already mentioned, Benjamin was not in a position to give any more than a semi-philosophical account of what he meant by retrieving some notion of progress from historical materialism in which the catastrophes of history could be redeemed. Anything he took from *Wozzeck* in this regard is expressed only in hazy poetic terms. Nevertheless, it is at least possible to construct a coherent philosophy out of resonant ideas from Berg's contemporaries into which the perceptual experiences of weakness and guilt outlined above fit into. Again relying on Nietzsche as a historical intermediary between Büchner and Berg, I am calling this construct the 'utopia of dangerous experimentalism', after a phrase he uses in *Human, all too Human*.[65] In his earlier pro-Wagner years, Nietzsche had thought religion was necessary for making sense out of the randomness of nature and thus human existence. He changed his mind after reading Roger Boscovich's *Philosophia Naturalis* (1758) in 1872, which gave him a hopelessly out-of-date mechanistic account of the world closer to

[64] The life of a modern creature also has the expense of 3.5 billion years of evolution to pay too, so it is much more than the ordered discharge of energy as presently constituted.

[65] 'the dangerous privilege of living *experimentally*': *Human, all too Human: A Book for Free Spirits*, trans. R.J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986): '[…], der dem freien Geiste das gefährliche Vorrecht gibt, *auf den Versuch* hin leben und sich dem Abenteuer anbieten zu dürfen, […]' (*Menschliches, Allzumenschliches: Ein Buch für freie Geister*, 1878, 79, 80; Preface, 4).

Büchner's Laplacean understanding. Rather than getting to grips with the latest ideas of Maxwell and Boltzmann, which would presumably have confirmed his earlier view, Boscovich convinced him that the world was predictable after all and so metaphysics was unnecessary. This meant art had no function either, and Wagner's metaphysical music was a temporary palliative on the road to a scientific future that did away with any kind of religion altogether.[66]

In a letter to his wife, Berg quoted a passage from Nietzsche's following book, *The Gay Science* (*Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*, 1882/87), which expresses the same idea of an adventurous, experimental life, by analogy with a ship that is now free to sail unhindered on the open seas.[67] There is plenty of evidence in the letters, endorsed by the use of numerical patterns in his music, that in his personal life, Berg did subscribe to the view that everything – life cycles, and his own life – was governed by the sort of mechanical unfolding described by Boscovich. It might also be argued that the Schoenberg school were conducting composition in a theory-experiment dynamic as if it corresponded to science. Indeed, *Wozzeck* itself comprises 15 tonal-atonal experiments, many borrowing a traditional musical form as the control condition against which results may be compared.[68] However, although Berg was personally operating with something similar to a middle-period Nietzschean perspective, in this final section I argue that, the opera *Wozzeck* hints at a theology that modifies the idea of free experimentalism in world governed by regularity (or even God, as Schoenberg thought) so that it applies in Boltzmann and Darwin's universe, where nature – and the life that grows out of it – is every bit as chaotic and random as Nietzsche had initially thought.

Pauline Science

Aside from the ordinary flow of time, Berg's psychological realism has Wozzeck experience two special modes of time: presence, the sense/illusion of self arising between thought and deed; and the negation of time, or non-time. I have argued that the latter, which calls the subject back to the void, can be associated with entropy. One might guess, then, that the scientific correlate for the former would be energy, but it's much more interesting than that. 'Energy' was named from the Greek *ἐνέργεια*, meaning 'activity' or 'operation', by Thomas Young in 1807.[69] Before that, Leibiniz's term *vis viva* had been in circulation and it could be argued that Romantic notions of oneness with nature, and organicism, arose

[66] Julian Young, *Nietzsche's Philosophy of Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 60-66.
[67] In response to his fiancée's question 'what is our goal?' he answers that it is 'the perfection of each human soul', 'to become a good, honourable, noble character', going on 'Nietzsche uses the image of "new seas" towards which his ship is irresistibly heading': 23 August 1909, *Letters to his Wife*, 90-1. Berg was slightly misremembering Aphorism 343 of Book V: 'das Meer, unser Meer liegt wieder offen da, vielleicht gab es noch niemals ein so "offnes Meer" '.
[68] Adorno noted Berg's trials involved thrusting unexpected combinations together and then forcing them to completion: he did not so much fashion his musical ideas as 'outwit' them: 'Forming for Berg inevitably meant combining, also layering, synthesizing the incompatible, the disparate, and letting them grow together: deforming'. He demonstrated 'such self-destructive geniality, to set oneself impossible tasks and then *solve* them', which 'required a capacity for obsessive tinkering'. Adorno, *Berg*, 23.
[69] Andrew Robinson, *The Last Man Who Knew Everything: Thomas Young, the Anonymous Polymath Who Proved Newton Wrong, Explained How We See, Cured the Sick and Deciphered the Rosetta Stone* (New York: Pi Press 2006).

from the understanding that this 'living force' inhabited all animate things. The prodigious amount of effort expended on understanding the physical properties of energy cannot be divorced from the power and importance of the steam engine, a machine whose purpose was to convert the chemical energy of coal into the kinetic energy of the piston. Energy was not a substance that could be isolated, nor force that operated between matter, but was a property of matter itself. The law of conservation of energy (given its modern formulation by Rudolf Clausius and others in the 1840s, but known since at least Leibniz) puts time and energy in a complementary relationship with one another: time only happens because energy is transformed from one form into another.[70] Poetic though it might sound, the industrial revolution, and indeed what many in the nineteenth century would have understood by the term 'progress', relied on the almost literal theft of time from nature.

Energy in this form, however, shares little with Woyzeck/Wozzeck's subjectivity of presence. Büchner's fatalism grew out of a deep understanding of the physics involved here. The binomial man-nature (or life-nature, as I expressed it above) only arises from our peculiar viewpoint: humankind cannot dominate nature, since the two are already inseparable.[71] Because we are enmeshed within the nature we seek to understand we can only partially conceptualize notions like time and energy through dialectic (and necessarily contradictory) frameworks. Thus the apparent ability to control nature by exploiting time and energy seems to be matched by the countervailing force of entropy, which continually impedes progress.[72] The (average) increase in entropy of a system can thus be seen as enacting a restoration in which nature appears to be taking back the time man has appropriated. Appears, that is, from the anthropocentric view of struggle with nature: the symmetry of the mathematics shows that, as far as the universe is concerned, nothing happens: past, present and future are all the same. Benjamin's 'homogeneous, empty time' is, in terms of nineteenth-century thermodynamics, the mediation between energy and entropy, and, however great the quantities of energy that are channelled into industrial production are, entropy will always step up to compensate, and so it remains 'homogenous, empty time'.

Actually, the clue to understanding the scientific correlate of Wozzeck's subjectivity of presence is not Young's measurable quantity 'energy', but the concept of *energia* in Paul's theology.[73] Although action (*energia*) plays a central role in Paul's letters, it has little to do with physical activity in the world. As he says, 'in whatever condition each was called, there let him remain with God'. (Cor. 7:24) This does not mean living in Christ precludes good works – indeed, it might even be expected that they would arise as a consequence – but rather that the change faith brings about does not entail physical

[70] In classical mechanics, time and energy are said to form a 'canonically conjugate pair'.
[71] Marx argued in *Das Kapital* that man-nature was not even an anthropocentric but a bourgeois distinction.
[72] Entropy was not named as such until 1854, but had been understood in some form since at least Leibniz in the seventeenth century.
[73] Young was a philologist, as well as a scientist, and it is unlikely that the theological overtones of his choice of nomenclature escaped him. Apart from his largely theoretical scientific work, Young was also responsible for the concept of 'Indo-European languages' after making a comprehensive study of over 400 languages.

action in and of itself. Instead the 'act' that faith makes possible is the transformation of the linguistic content of the announcement, its 'potentiality', into a lived reality, its 'activation'. In Agamben's slightly cryptic formulation: 'What has been announced is the same faith that realizes the power of the announcement. Faith is the announcement's being in its act, its *energia'*.[74]

In this reading, Agamben is attempting to restore a more Judaic reading of Paul, one that he claims to find in Benjamin's Theses, and I am claiming is to be found in the Büchner-Berg hybrid artwork *Wozzeck*. Typically, Christian theology has emphasized the utopian aspect of Paul, the belief that their will be heaven on earth at some point in the future. The humanist view of progress that undergirds historical materialism (vulgar Marxism) is then a continuation of this Christian theology in an apparently secular guise.[75] Benjamin's attempt to rethink progress, according to Agamben, draws on the Jewish tradition of a dual conception of Messianic time. One is the utopian Messianism ; the other, is a restorative time which, to quote Scholem, is oriented towards 'the return and the re-establishment of an original state of things and to a "life with the ancestors" '.[76] In the Jewish faith – and in Benjamin's writing – both of these opposing forms of Messianism jostle against one another in dialectic contradiction. Agamben's own synthesis, the 'time that remains', and what he is suggesting obtains in Benjamin, is a Messianism of presence (*paraousia*) in which the forward and backward gazes are brought into fleeting accommodation with one another allowing a moment of heaven into the ordinary world. In terms of time, he likens this to seizing *kairos* (occasional time) from *chronos* (ordinary time).

If, in physical terms, ordinary time is the depletion of energy and the increase of entropy, then can there be a material explanation for this seized occasional time? If it is only a psychological state it is, of course, beyond the bounds of empirical enquiry, but nevertheless it does accord with the practice of science as experienced by the scientist. In order to understand this, it is necessary turn to Benjamin's exact contemporary, the scientist, and philosopher of science, Michael Polanyi.[77] Polanyi thought of science in the same 'weakly redemptive' manner that Benjamin saw history.[78] '[In science] we have a paradigm of the Pauline scheme of faith, works and grace. The discoverer works in the belief that his labours will prepare his mind for receiving a truth from sources over which he has no control. I regard

[74] Agamben, *Time that Remains*, 88-90.
[75] Nietzsche makes this point in the first part of *Beyond Good and Evil* (*Jenseits Gut und Böse*, 1886), which is not an attack on science, as many people wrongly see it, but an attack on the importation of this Christian theology into science.
[76] Gershom Scholem, *The Messianic Idea in Judaism and Other Essays on Jewish Spirituality* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1971), 3.
[77] Polanyi was until recently considered to be a minor figure in the philosophy of science: acknowledged by sociologists as a precursor of Thomas Kuhn and regarded as something of an embarrassment by Anglo-American philosophers. Now Kuhn's ideas and post-structuralism are on the wane, and analytic philosophy is going through a slow but promising transformation, Polanyi is beginning to be taken more seriously. Indeed, many recent philosophers of science – especially those with scientific expertise – adopt a view of scientific methodology broadly in line with Polanyi's without realizing their debt. Alan Sokal, for example, a respected quantum physicist who saw front-line action in the so-called 'science wars' of the 1990s, subscribes to a pragmatic view of science (what he calls a 'modest scientific realism') in which faith and judgement play an important part: *Beyond the Hoax: Science, Philosophy and Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008). The recent publication of Mary Jo Nye's *Michael Polanyi and his Generation: Origins of the Social Construction of Science* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2011), which I draw on in this segment, is part of this renewed interest.
[78] Benjamin, *Illuminations*, 245-6.

the Pauline scheme therefore as the only adequate conception of scientific discovery'.[79] The scientist's physical actions in the world, the things he does in the laboratory, have no intrinsic value because they have no bearing on the truth he seeks. The important 'work' that the scientist carries out is mental preparation for the revelation of truth. Rather than defining truth in absolute terms, he avoided the paralysing realism/anti-realism debate by defining truth as a future-directed process:

> If anything is believed to be capable of a largely indeterminate range of future manifestations, it is thus believed to be real. A statement about nature is believed to be true if it is believed to disclose an aspect of something real in nature. A true physical theory is therefore believed to be no mere mathematical relation between observed data, but to represent an aspect of reality, which may yet manifest itself inexhaustibly in the future.[80]

Pauline faith exists suspended between the *already* of the resurrection and the *not yet* of the second coming creating a community of those anxiously, hopefully awaiting the second coming. The expectation of the imminent revelation of truth incites the same sort of *present* anxiety in the scientist: 'a problem which does not worry us, that does not excite us, is not a problem; it does not exist'.[81]

It is, however, possible to go further than this to argue that the way in which thermodynamics and evolution are presented in *Wozzeck* shows that there is a material basis for seizing *kairos* from the dialectic of time operational in energy-entropy. And, unlike the deterministic model that Büchner was working within, Boltzmann and Darwin's new, non-absolute, stochastic conceptions do indeed allow for the occasional miracle.[82] On a global level, the universe is devolving from a low entropy state into a high entropy one (which is why humans have been able to evolve the biological clocks that endow them with a sense of linear time), but this does not prevent localized areas of order from emerging. Just like the snatches of musical order that emerge from the stasis in, sometimes order can emerge from chaos, and sometimes – as in the case of the steps on the evolutionary ladder, and in the formation of the planets around the sun – the higher ordered state sits in a well of stability. This is what some in the eighteenth century had got wrong about evolution: it is not a teleological process leading to higher complexity, and ultimately consciousness: in fact the entropic tendency means species are more likely to de-evolve into simpler forms when external pressures ease, or go extinct when they increase. Ascension to a higher state of complexity is in itself a highly unusual event, and a risky one that is almost

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[79] Polanyi, 'Faith and Reason', 247.

[80] Michael Polanyi, 'Science and Reality', *The British Journal for the Philosophy of Science*, 18(3) (Nov., 1967), 177-196; 191. This article summarizes the conclusions of Chapter 1 of *Science, Faith and Reality* (1946). Nietzsche had already pointed out the weaknesses of both the realist and anti-realist (or positivist) positions in Book I of *Beyond Good and Evil* using ideas he had borrowed from F. A. Lange's *History of Materialism* (*Geschichte des Materialismus und Kritik seiner Bedeutung in der Gegenwart* (1866)). However, he never reached this elegant early formulation of what Badiou now calls 'truth procedure'.

[81] Polanyi, 'Science and Reality', 195.

[82] Boltzmann and Darwin are just two representatives of a the change from a 'classical' understanding of nature to a 'modern' one. Darwin's theory didn't become truly modern, in this sense, until the discovery of genes – and that traits were inherited in discrete packets, rather than continuously - by Hugo de Vries in 1901.

certain to fail.[83] However, occasionally a miracle does occur, and just as life can emerge from nothing, human projects – be they scientific, artistic or political – do sometimes bear fruit – even if it is of a kind that was never anticipated. This makes experiment key to the revolutionary moment in *Wozzeck*: although it comes with a high probability of failure, when it is guided by the provisional acceptance of a rationally determined theory, it is able to increases the frequency with which useful accidents occur.

Guilt and Catastrophe

The purpose of Büchner's judicial experiment is to push the idea of legal truth to its limits: his projected audience were being asked to decide whether Woyzeck could be considered innocent given a full understanding of the situation surrounding the murder. Surprisingly perhaps, the answer is 'no'. The human being is always-already guilty, the penetrating insight that Berg – accepting my argument in the previous section – managed to cut out and then reattach in a manner that accorded with the new probabilistic understanding of nature that obtained in the 1920s. One way of understanding the nature of this ineradicable guilt is to turn to Heidegger, who was also driven to explore the theme after similar experiences in the First World War.[84] For him, *Dasein* is trapped between two nothingnesses: that of its thrownness (*Geworfenheit*) and that of its projection (*Entwurf*).[85] The individual is doubly unfree: it can do nothing about its current situation, and whatever plans it has are subject to events that it cannot predict. Heidegger formally defines this property to be guilt (*Schuld*) and its similarity to Wozzeck's existential guilt-debt is clear. For Heidegger, since this guilt is constitutive of *Dasein*, the only freedom available – and now the connection to Paul becomes apparent – is to accept one's own essential weakness in the face of a past, present, and future that one cannot control. Wozzeck, then, is most free – his life has the most authenticity (*Eigentlichkeit*) in Heidegger's terminology – in those moments where his failure to express in language the content of his experience or thought becomes an admission of his own impotence. He only attains selfhood – a subjectivity of presence – at the point of de-subjectification, when his non-agency, his trappedness, his guilt, becomes apparent to him. In contrast, when he emulates the Captain and the Doctor's moral and scientific dogmatism with his own dogmatic interpretation of Christian law, any hint of freedom disappears. Once he has accepted that Marie has committed '[eine] Sünde, so dick und so breit — es stinkt, dass man die Engelchen zum Himmel hinaus räuchern', there is only one course of action open to him: to seek what appears to be divinely sanctioned retributive justice.

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[83] Darwin was adamant that there was no teleology involved in natural selection: 'But I grieve to say that I cannot honestly go as far as you do about Design…. You lead me to infer that you believe "that variation has been led along certain beneficial lines".—I cannot believe this; & I think you would have to believe, that the tail of the Fan-tail was led to vary in the number & direction of its feathers in order to gratify the caprice of a few men'. Letter to Asa Grey, November 28, 1860, www.darwinproject.ac.uk/entry-2998 (stable link). (This is a contested issue, for an alternate viewpoint see: James G. Lennox, 'Darwin was a Teleologist', *Biology and Philosophy* 8(4) (1993), 409-421.)

[84] Many of the ideas in *Being and Time* (*Sein und Zeit*, 1927), including *Dasein* as a post-Nietzschean reformulation of the Kantian subject, can be traced back to his re-reading of Paul in 'The Phenomenology of Religious Life' ('Einleitung in die Phänomenologie der Religion', delivered 1920-21).

[85] Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. J. Macquarrie and E. Robinson (Oxford: Blackwell, 1962), 284.

Thus *Wozzeck* posed in 1925 the same problem that Büchner faced in the 1830s, and Adorno's 'philosophy of impotence' failed to address, namely, the problem of action.[86] Revolutionary action – any action at all, for that matter – requires precisely the doctrinal or religious attitude proscribed by Pauline theology: without the conviction that one is doing absolutely the right thing, one is reduced to impotence, to endless rational debate. And nothing can ever be settled by rationality, at some point, religion has to step in and make a decision. The status of each of *Woyzeck* and *Wozzeck* as conspicuous artistic experiments demonstrate how a Pauline conception of the scientific method might serve as a template for politics. The eventual goal of science is a theory of everything, something that will never arrive, and so the waiting of the anxious scientific community is an on-going condition in the present. However, on a more localized level, the eschatological catastrophe is not just imminent, it happens every time an experiment doesn't go as predicted. The scientist must always be open to the fact that the results of his investigations might confound his 'anticipatory powers'. Polanyi again: 'we can never quite tell in what new way reality may yet manifest itself', it is external to us […] and so its future manifestations can never be completely under our intellectual control'.[87] Echoing Nietzsche's 'dangerous privilege of living experimentally', he continues 'all true knowledge is inherently hazardous, just as all true faith is a leap into the unknown'. The crucial point, though, is that, scientific faith is religious and non-religious simultaneously: 'Knowing includes its own uncertainty as an integral part of it, just as […] all faith necessarily includes its own dubiety'.[88] After rational and sober reflection on the observed results of the experiment, the scientist must retain the ability to modify or jettison the theory to which he was passionately committed – a flexibility of mind not called for in Christianity or dialectic materialism.[89] The stop-start eschatological system that results is not simply an on-going enactment of faith, but a cycle of anticipation, action that actually brings about the end of time, disappointment, rethinking, and repledging faith.

A truly revolutionary politics, then, would gain its strength through an admission of its radical weakness: it would be strong enough to endure almost continuous failure. Indeed, as Polanyi was keen to stress, the oppressiveness of a government can gauged by the extent to which it either refuses to accept scientific facts which contradict its ideology, or tries to co-opt scientific research to suit its own

[86] The problem of action is, according to Derrida, one Heidegger's 'avoidances': he sets it up, but then conspicuously fails to address it: Jacques Derrida, *Of Spirit: Heidegger and the Question*, trans. Geoffrey Bennington and Rachel Bowlby (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991).

[87] Polanyi, 'Faith and Reason', 244.

[88] I define: theology to be a theorization of the relationship between sacred and profane – as in the Pauline theology discussed here – and religion as the fixing of doctrine. In order to force the experiment through to its conclusion the scientist (and the revolutionary) must act quasi-religiously, but because what is fixed can always be altered to suit a changed situation, it is never truly religious.

[89] It is debatable whether this 'flexibility of mind' exists in individual scientists: Max Planck famously said that science only progresses as opponents of the new theory die off: *Wissenschaftliche Selbstbiographie. Mit einem Bildnis und der von Max von Laue gehaltenen Traueransprache* (Leipzig: Johann Ambrosius Barth Verlag, 1948), 22. Nevertheless, it is certainly a property of what Badiou calls the 'scientific subject', the supra-human subjectivity that the activity of science constitutes.

political agenda.[90] The pertinent example here is Stalin's refusal to accept the Copenhagen interpretation of quantum physics (Werner Heisenberg, Niels Bohr, *et al*, 1924-1927) – the final step in the discovery of the indeterminacy of the universe started by Boltzmann – because it fatally undermined the vulgar Hegelianism of dialectical materialism. Even if he had shot all the physicists – as he half-jokingly suggested – it would never have stopped Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle (*Unbestimmtheitsrelation* – 'indeterminacy relation', 1927) from being true.[91]

In the indeterminate, entropic universe, conditions that are repeated aesthetically in *Wozzeck*-world, there is always going to be a drift away from what anyone wants, plans or expects. If there ever was the possibility of the Hegelian utopia Adorno dreamt of, its not materialising was always going to be the likely outcome. But in the dialectic view of time it presents between restorative and utopian time offers the promise of a small amount of accidental progress (grace), even if it is at the expense of an almost unbearable amount of failure (works). Adorno's series of prescriptions for an art that indexes the divergence between semblance and reality, between what is and what should have been does not apply here: Wozzeck snatches moments of utopia in the present. This is why the anti-doctrinal, revolutionary moment in, and Berg's *Wozzeck* – echoed in Benjamin Pauline history and Polanyi's science – sounds remarkably like Rosa Luxemburg's dialectic of spontaneity and organization. [92] For her, it was not enough that revolution should take place, as it had in Russia in 1917, but it was also necessary that the revolutionary spirit in all its dangerous indeterminacy should continue in the life that followed. Luxemburg was disgusted by the way Lenin and Trotsky were willing to turn to the same oppressive means that the revolution was meant to overthrow in order to impose a doctrinaire interpretation of Marxist theory. They had to resort to violence in order to ensure that their experiment turned out the way their theory had predicted. Instead, they ought to have accepted the typically unpredictable results that democracy had thrown up and rethought their approach. 'Only experience is capable of correcting and

[90] The thesis of Nye's *Michael Polanyi and his Generation* is that Polanyi's philosophy was guided by an anti-Soviet political agenda, he was particularly concerned with the way science was commandeered by the five-year plans and expected to make a direct contribution to economic growth. Polanyi believed that if scientists were free to pursue their own research interests free from government interference they would automatically be attracted to projects that benefitted everyone.

[91] Stalin wanted to ban 'bourgeois' quantum physics because it was incompatible with the dialectic materialist understanding of history. When he realized that his scientists wouldn't be able to build a nuclear bomb without it, he reportedly said to Beria 'Leave them in peace – we can always shoot them later'. Ethan Pollock, *Stalin and the Science Wars* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2006), especially Chapter 4: 72-103. See also A. Cross. 'The Crisis in Physics: Dialectical Materialism and Quantum Theory', *Social Studies of Science*, 21(4) (1991), 735-59.

[92] Luxemburg's spontaneity is prefigured in Büchner's thought. He insisted to one of his fellow political activists that revolution could never come about from ideas arising in the educated classes: an education was designed to reproduce existing class relations and worked irreversibly in the interest of the governing order; as such, there was no way of bridging the gap between the educated and uneducated groups. 'Die Gesellschaft mittelst der *Idee*, von der gebildeten Klasse aus reformieren? Unmöglich! […] Sie werden nie über den Riß zwischen der gebildeten und unbebildeten Gesellschaft hinauskommen'. Büchner to Karl Gutzkow, June 1836, Büchner, *Werke und Briefe*, Pörnbacher (ed.), 319. The calls Luxemburg made in the wake of the 1917 Russian Revolution for immediate achievable political aims, such as the calls for basic democratic freedoms – the right to assembly, free speech, the vote, etc. – are precisely those made in 'The Hessian Messenger'. Both believed that there were certain things the right-thinking educated person still had a duty to campaign for while waiting for spontaneous proletarian uprising.

opening new ways. Only unobstructed, effervescent life falls into a thousand new forms and improvisations, brings to life creative force, itself corrects all mistaken attempts'.[93]

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[93] Rosa Luxemburg, 'The Russian Revolution' [1918], *The Rosa Luxemburg Reader*, ed. Kevin Anderson and Peter Hudis (New York: Monthly Review, 2004), 281-310.

In Search of a New Dionysius

> The writer's task is to cleanse, to organize, to articulate the substance of life. Throughout life there prevails a ghastly absurdity, a frightful raging, of Matter – such as heredity, inner compulsion, stupidity, malice, profound wickedness. Throughout the intellectual sphere confusion, an almost unbelievable inconsistency, prevails: here we have the Augean stable which needs to be cleansed over and over again and transformed into a temple.
>
> —Hofmannsthal, 'The Book of Friends'[1]

> 'Is it religious? … I don't like it when it's religious.'
>
> —Strauss, in conversation[2]

While the British are soberly tucking into their pancakes on Shrove Tuesday, the Catholics in Austria are celebrating the end of a whole week of carnival festivities. In nineteenth-century Vienna this meant status-levelling balls at which working-class men could dance with aristocratic women. One such ball was the Fiakerball, or 'Cabbies' Ball', where nobles and the city's taxi drivers met as temporary equals, and which provides the background for the second act of *Arabella*. Apart from introducing some attractive *couleur locale*, Hofmannsthal had good reasons for setting the action on *Faschingsdienstag*, or 'Carnival Tuesday'. Dramatically, it gives a sense of urgency to the proceedings. Arabella's father is an inveterate gambler and, having lost all his family's money at cards, it falls to Arabella to rescue them by making a good match. Being the final ball of the season, this is her last chance to find someone, or be forced to choose from among her uninspiring group of suitors. It also gave the opera a simple socially critical take-home message. The Fiakerball, with its Carnival favourites of frivolity, drunkenness and lewd behaviour, acts as a microcosm of a Vienna that was floating in an unsustainable economic bubble – not just in the 1860s, when the opera is set, but also in the 1920s, when it was written. The allusion to carnival flags up the connection of the opera to the Salzburg Festival and Hofmannsthal's post-war 'reconstructive' project in which ritual theatre was supposed to bring the people of Europe together in pursuit of a new ideal.

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[1] Hofmannsthal, 'From "The Book of Friends" ', *Selected Prose*, trans. Mary Hottinger, Tania & James Stern (New York: Pantheon, 1952), 368-9.

[2] In a conversation about Russian novelists in Paris, Thursday evening, 8 March 1900. Reported in a diary entry by Romain Rolland in Richard Strauss and Romain Rolland, *Correspondence*, ed. Rollo Myers (London: Calder and Boyars, 1968), 135.

Hofmannsthal certainly brought audiences together, but usually in bafflement at the intricacy of the symbolic and mythical universes that he created. One of the reasons for the success of *Arabella* with the opera-going public was undoubtedly the absence of the sort heavy-handed symbolism that weighs down its predecessors *Ariadne auf Naxos* (1912/16), *Die ägyptische Helena* (1928), and especially *Die Frau ohne Schatten* (1919).[3] *Arabella* seems to have come about as something of a compromise between Hofmannsthal's natural inclination towards mythic subject matter and his realization of just how little myth audiences were prepared to stomach. The following is from the essay he wrote for the premiere of *Helena*.

> How else can we capture our own present, engulfed as it is in thousands of years of culture – a culture which floods our very being with East and West, which creates such a range of awareness, such tension of contraries within this awareness, such a sense of Here yet Elsewhere? … No middle-class, everyday dialogue can capture this! Let us write mythological operas, the truest of all art forms, believe me![4]

Just four months later, he wrote the following to Strauss in relation to *Arabella*.

> But what one can do at any rate is to try and increase the chances of popular success and that has been done in this case, I believe, through choice of subject, milieu and characters. Anything mythical or heroical makes a modern audience uneasy, anything sombre and grand (which, moreover, tends to conjure up associations with the *Ring*) terrifies them to the marrow of their bones; but give them a hotel lounge, a ballroom, betrothal, officers, cabbies, tradesmen and waiters, and they know where they are.[5]

The completed opera looks like a Molière comedy of manners or a *Konversationstück*, a form popular in Austria in the late nineteenth-century that poked gentle fun at upper-class salon society; the familiarity of the setting combined with the straightforwardness of the plot certainly makes the opera accessible without undue intellectual effort. Yet a closer investigation reveals that it is just as replete with symbolism and myth as any of the earlier works. Hofmannsthal's death before the opera's completion means there is no corresponding *Arabella* essay to illuminate this and part of what follows is an attempt to imagine what Hofmannsthal would have put in such an essay.

Recently, there has been some success using anthropological theory to show how opera models ritual for its audience or how it becomes an interactive ritual performance itself. For Linda and Michael Hutchen, in *Opera: The Art of Dying*, Orphic operas enact the structure of funerary rituals, which they claim conforms to Arnold van Gennep's 'rite of passage', and thereby help teach their audience

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[3] 'All your recent works for the theatre (*Die Frau ohne Schatten*, *Ariadne*, etc.) are full of riches. I only regret that the great writer who gives you such brilliant libretti too often lacks a sense of the theatre: his subjects, as in *Die Frau ohne Schatten*, mark time a bit too much, or else are cluttered up with obscure thought'. Rolland to Strauss, 10 June 1924, *Correspondence*, 100

[4] Hofmannsthal, '*The Egyptian Helen*' (1928), translation in Kenneth Segar, 'Hofmannsthal's *Elektra*: from drama to libretto'*, Salome/ Elektra* (London: John Calder, 1988), 62.

[5] Hofmannsthal to Strauss, 18 October 1928, *Correspondence*, trans. Hanns Hammelmann and Ewald Osers (London: Collins, 1961), 510.

how to behave in times of grief.[6] Martha Feldman has taken Stanley Tambiah's nuanced theorization of ritual as performance and used it to show how eighteenth-century Italian opera was conceived as an interactive art form, with the arias composed in a way that accounted for audience participation.[7] This approach is not possible here because the modern concept of 'ritual' was being constructed by Hofmannsthal's contemporaries – anthropologists such as Rudolf Otto, Émile Durkheim and van Gennep as well as psychologists and sociologists such as Freud, Jung and Weber – with whose work he was familiar.[8] He was also interested in comparative religion, particularly those Eastern religions like Buddhism, Hinduism and Shintō, which seemed more adaptable to the needs of modernity than the Abrahamic faiths.[9] Furthermore, in preparation for writing his own ritual theatre for the Salzburg Festival, Hofmannsthal undertook extensive research of medieval theatre, such as Hans Sachs's Shrovetide plays.[10] Since Hofmannsthal was consciously trying to (re-)create ritual theatre armed with the latest anthropological tools, it is not possible to use its models in order to explain ritual in *Arabella*. as have done for earlier opera. Catherine Bell has convincingly argued in *Ritual Theory: Ritual Practice*, the theoretical models of ritual that Hutchens and Feldman have deployed in their investigation of earlier opera are not universal archetypes but the result of anthropologists projecting their own theory-practice dichotomy (derived from the theory-empiricism dichotomy of science in general) onto ritual.[11]

The problem that faced Hofmannsthal, then, was how to do religion when it has been explained scientifically. For the pre-modern, rituals are just things that are done and myths are just the way things are; but in the theory-practice dichotomy the practice of ritual was meant to affirm the mythical doctrine, which, by definition, was not true. How can one do ritual when it is no longer possible to sustain the (false) mythological beliefs that allow it to function? On one hand he believed that, as part of the reconstructive Salzburg project, the affirmation of a shared belief, or myth, through ritual theatre was necessary to forge social cohesion. On the other, he knew that the Dionysian intoxication that was supposed to bring about a feeling of spiritual communion with one's fellow man could only be experienced by contemporary audiences as fake. Hofmannsthal's libretto for *Arabella* was an attempt to overcome this seemingly intractable problem by rebuilding opera as a secularized ritual fit for the scientific age.

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[6] Linda and Michael Hutchen, *Opera: The Art of Dying* (Cambridge Mass. & London: Harvard University Press, 2004), 100-1.

[7] Martha Feldman, 'Magic Mirrors and the Seria Stage: Thoughts toward a Ritual View', *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 48(3) (Autumn, 1995), 423-484.

[8] Not all of these authors appear in Michael Hamburger's list of books in 'Hofmannsthal's Bibliothek'. However, Otto's work is quoted often by Jung, who appears prominently in Hofmannsthal's library and his study of Eastern religions in his earlier years would have brought him into contact with the anthropological literature that influenced Durkheim. Also, Jung uses van Gennep's rite of passage to explain the difficult transition between archetypes.

[9] Freny Mistry, 'Hofmannsthal's Oriental Library', *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 71(2) (Apr., 1972), 177-197.

[10] Brian Coghlan, *Hofmannsthal's Festival Dramas* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1964), 21-8.

[11] Catherine Bell, *Ritual Theory: Ritual Practice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).

And where did Strauss's music figure in these grand plans? The Hofmannsthal scholar Benjamin Bennett argues that in any operatic work 'the languages of the poet and the composer, when put to the test of interpretation, remain … fundamentally disjoint'. He claims that the only way in which they can be said to form a 'self-reflexively unified artistic construct' is through a shared 'knowledge of cultural history' and by 'accident'. [12] Hofmannsthal and Strauss are known to have had fundamentally different ideas about what theatre ought to be, as the correspondence over *Arabella* vividly demonstrates.[13] It is also evident that their philosophical attitudes to art were distinct. Whereas Hofmannsthal wanted to rescue something of religion from science, Strauss was glad to see the back of it and keen to explore what music could do when freed from its former metaphysical baggage.[14] It is understandable, then, that even after many of his suggestions had been incorporated, the libretto presented Strauss with a number of challenges. Not least of these was that, despite its domestic, profane setting, the symbolism and the ritual trajectory of the opera – culminating as it does in a purification rite – is still religious in tone. I shall show that Strauss writes what can be termed a 'secular' music that combines with Hofmannsthal's secularized ritual to create an opera that is, to use Bennett's expression, a 'self-reflexively unified artistic construct'. In doing so they re-privilege the Dionysian in art: avoiding pseudo-religious qualities like the dissolution of the individual and oneness with nature, and emphasizing instead dynamism and entry into lived life.

Part II is divided into four chapters. In this first chapter, I look at how Nietzsche's view of Wagner changed between *The Birth of Tragedy* and *The Case of Wagner*, considering how these works relate to Strauss's music and then look at how these issues inform Hofmannsthal's post-war 'reconstructive' Salzburg ideology, which also informs *Arabella*. Chapter 6 concentrates on Hofmannsthal's literary contribution, while Chapter 7 looks at how Strauss dealt with the Wagnerian inheritance. In Chapter 8, I look at how their different views on metaphysical questions intersect to create a surprisingly unified vision in the finished work.

THE CASE OF STRAUSS

Charles Youmans has uncovered the prominent role that Nietzsche's philosophy played in Strauss's artistic development and in doing so has probably done more than anyone to rehabilitate him as an authentic modernist.[15] Strauss, far from being the intellectual lightweight his peers and subsequent generations of music historians had thought, had engaged with Schopenhauer and particularly Nietzsche

[12] Benjamin Bennett, *Hugo Hofmannsthal: The Theatres of Consciousness* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 234.
[13] Stephen Paul Scher, 'The Strauss-Hofmannsthal Operatic Experiment: Tradition, Modernity, or Avant-Garde?', *Revue de littérature comparée* 61(3) (juil./sept., 1987): reprinted in Steven P Scher, Walter Bernhart, Werner Wolf, *Essays on Literature and Music 1967-2004* (Amsterdam; New York: Rodopi, 2004), 237-47.
[14] Charles Youmans, 'The Role of Nietzsche in Richard Strauss's Artistic Development', *The Journal of Musicology*, 21(3) (2003), 322.
[15] Charles Youmans, *Richard Strauss's Orchestral Music and the German Intellectual Tradition: The Philosophical Roots of Musical Modernism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005).

over a prolonged period of at least ten years. It was an intellectual journey that Youmans has been able to trace through the symphonies and tone poems up to and including *Eine Alpensinfonie* (1915). But before considering at how Strauss turned to Nietzsche in order to help him to swerve away from greatest musical influence, it is necessary to look at why Nietzsche himself turned against Wagner.[16] This is important because with *Arabella* Strauss and Hofmannsthal were continuing the Wagnerian project while taking on board the criticisms of Nietzsche.

Nietzsche's Wagner

In order to understand the sustained violence of Nietzsche's attack in *The Case of Wagner* (*Der Fall Wagner*, hereafter *CW*, 1888) it is first necessary to ask why he was so enthusiastic about the composer in the first place.[17] The answer to this question can be found in the preface to the first edition of *The Birth of Tragedy* (*Die Geburt der Tragödie aus dem Geiste der Musik*, hereafter *BT*, 1872), which was addressed to Wagner himself.[18] He makes it clear that, although the text ostensibly deals with the seemingly remote issues of Greek tragedy, it was 'a seriously German problem [that] is faced here and placed right in the centre of German hopes'. (*BT*, Preface) He goes on to express his conviction that 'art represents the highest task and the truly metaphysical activity of this life'. Nietzsche was endorsing Wagner as the heir to the project begun by Winckelmann and continued by Goethe and Hölderlin, amongst others, to create a pan-German culture based on the Greek model. The main idea in the first half of *BT* is that in the tragedies of Aeschylus and Sophocles, the Dionysian and Apollonian polarities mutually reinforce one another so that the full metaphysical terror of earthly suffering is at once revealed and made bearable, veiled by the radiant beauty of dream-like illusion. The deceptive function of art that helps us to adopt the 'tragic worldview' – the manner of thinking that sees both pain and pleasure as necessary parts of life – remains important in Nietzsche's mature aesthetics. What he came to realize, though, was that the optimistic belief expressed in the second half of *BT*, that Wagner's operas also perform this useful deception and might therefore provide the basis for German cultural renewal, was itself the result of a deception of a different kind.

This is because Nietzsche, in his early initiation into the Wagnerian cult, made the classic decadent error of confusing cause with effect. In *BT* he was keen to stress the rapturous experience of the Dionysian festivities. He wrote that if, within the safety of Apollonian illusion, we add to

> the tremendous *terror* that seizes man when he is suddenly dumfounded by the cognitive form of phenomena … the blissful ecstasy that wells from the innermost depths of man, indeed of nature, at the collapse of the *principium individuationis*, we steal a glimpse into the nature of the Dionysian, which is brought home to us most intimately by the analogy of intoxication. (*BT*, 1)

[16] Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry* [1973] (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).
[17] Translations taken from Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Case of Wagner*, *Basic Writings of Nietzsche*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Random House, 2000), 601-48. Reference is made in the text to section number so it may be found easily in this or any English or German edition.
[18] Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Case of Wagner*, *Basic Writings*, 1-144.

Nietzsche found this kind of blissful intoxication in the music of *Tristan und Isolde* (1865) and believed that it might be able to achieve the same sense of cultural and social cohesion that he felt existed in pre-Socratic Greece. However, the ancient Athenians lived as a fully democratic group and the Dionysian ritual was thus a way of affirming and even strengthening a pre-existing community by the collective acceptance of the irrational, of the contingent and above all of the inevitability of suffering. But rather than seeking to validate a growing community in ritual, the German artistic elite were wrongheadedly attempting to reverse-engineer community feeling through the administration of psychologically manipulative ritual activities. Wagnerian opera might produce the something like the enjoyable spiritual *effect* of affirmative ritual practices, but it does not *cause* – and certainly is not *caused by* – anything other than a temporary, fake community. Since this community has no social basis other than its mutual love of Wagner, it dissolves once the performance is over.

Nietzsche spent much of *CW* talking about the physiological effects of Wagner's music, its ability to 'excite weary nerves', to 'persuade even the intestines' or to 'bewitch the marrow of the spine'. (*CW*, 5,6) This provides a jarring contrast with the spiritual experience people lured to Wagner are seeking: they 'require the sublime, the profound, the overwhelming' and they are convinced that '"[whoever] throws us is strong; whoever elevates us is divine; whoever leads us to intimations is profound." ' (*CW*, 6) Just as in religion and idealist philosophy, the illusion of depth is manufactured through the manipulation of ambiguous symbols.

> Wagner … invented a style for himself charged with 'infinite meaning' – he became the heir of Hegel. … It was not with this music that Wagner conquered [German youths], it was with the 'Idea' – it is the enigmatic character of his art, its playing hide-and-seek behind a hundred symbols … it is Wagner's genius for shaping clouds, his whirling, hurling, and twirling through the air, his everywhere and nowhere – the very same means by which Hegel formerly seduced and lured them! (*CW*, 10)

Sociologists and Anthropologists of Strauss and Hofmannsthal's generation, like Émile Durkheim, would have seen in Wagner's attempts to bring about a feeling of oneness with the Will all the hallmarks of the newly theorized ritual practice in which a suprahuman entity or force – something 'sacred' – is evoked in order to bond the 'moral community' together. In *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (1912), he identified ambiguity as one of the most effective ways of inducing spiritual experience, or 'effervescence', which he saw as a heightened awareness of the moral community.[19] Lévi-Strauss, who based his structuralist theory of myth on binary oppositions, also noted that mysterious or uncanny feelings could be produced by 'undecidables', for example, mist or fog which resist classification as ei-

[19] Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* (1912), trans. Joseph Ward Swain (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1957), 371-414.

ther earth or air.[20] Religions and other superstitions exploit gaps, aporie, antinomies in (or between) the deep structures of their society's mythologies that cannot be explained rationally, that is, in terms of the binary oppositions from which the mythologies are composed. They provide irrational, mysterious solutions which can then be used as the basis of an affirmative ritual. Wagner took a bourgeois myth – such as that of monogamy, located its aporia – what happens when the mythology of love conflicts with the mythology of honour, and then invented an irrational solution – union in a higher plane. He was able to create a greatly heightened spiritual experience through the skilful and calculated coordination of ambiguous dramatic, linguistic, scenic and above all tonal and timbral effects.

According to Durkheim 'there is something eternal about religion … . There can be no society which does not feel the need of upholding and reaffirming at regular intervals the collective sentiments and the collective ideas which make its unity and its personality.'[21] Religious rites were beneficial when the mythology they served the needs of the society – as, according to Nietzsche, they did in ancient Greece. They also did in the tribal rites witnessed in European colonies and would have done in the pre-modern church where, although religion was centrally administered, it still provided a useful focus for the community. However by insisting that their mythology was 'truer than the truth' Wagner's operas were harmful in the modern fragmented state, where uniformity could only be enforced by tyranny. That was why, in addition to traditional ritual practices, Wagner had to use techniques of persuasive coercion to bring about the desired spiritual effect.

Nietzsche drew attention to many of these. Wagner replaced musical logic with 'theatrical rhetoric' and the 'psychological picturesque' in order to achieve the 'effect of truth'. (*CW*, 8) He jettisoned the intricate rigour necessary for drama and instead presents a series of scenes, each one stronger than the last. (*CW*, 9) He browbeat his audience: 'he says something so often – till one despairs – till one believes it'. (*CW*, 1) And perhaps worst of all, unlike Bizet whose music 'gives wings to thought', he closed off all possibility of critical reflection. (*CW*, 1) All of this led to deep disillusionment with oneself: the individual cannot possibly live up to the purity of the ideals that have been so powerfully presented as absolute truths. Wagner's operas are at least as effective as Christianity at inducing the self-directed ressentiment responsible for a 'guilty conscience' – the basis of Christian morality.[22] (*Genealogy of Morality, Zur Genealogie der Moral*, 1887, hereafter *GM*, II, 22)

In the third essay of *GM*, 'What do Ascetic Ideals Mean?', Nietzsche dealt with artistic, and particularly Wagnerian, asceticism briefly in the first few sections and seems to have saved his real wrath for the priests. But one always feels that, while he appears to be attacking the priests, his mind is also still on Wagner. This is probably a reasonable assessment since he regarded the 'sphere of so-called

[20] 'Levi-Strauss himself saw Wagner as the father of his structural analysis of myth, and declared the line Wagner's Gurnemanz speaks to Parsifal as they make their way up to the temple of the Holy Grail – "You see, my son, time becomes space here" – the most profound of all definitions of myth'. M. Owen Lee, *Wagner: The Terrible Man and his Truthful Art* (Toronto : Toronto University Press, 1999), 55-6.
[21] Durkheim, 'Elementary Forms', 427.
[22] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, *Basic Writings*, 437-599.

moral values' to be 'narrower' than the aesthetic. (*CW*, Epilogue) He identified two ways that the ascetic priest is able to achieve his aim of making suffering endurable. One is by employing 'innocent' means. These see the priest as physician, as healer, as saviour and include

> the general muting of the feeling of life, mechanical activity, the petty pleasure, above all 'love of one's neighbour', herd organization, the awakening of the communal feeling of power through which the individual's discontent with himself is drowned in his pleasure in the prosperity of the community. (*GM* III, 19)

The other and more 'interesting' means, according to Nietzsche, are the 'guilty' ones. 'They involve one thing: some kind of an orgy of feeling – employed as the most effective means of deadening dull, paralyzing, protracted pain.' (*GM* III, 19) But the problem is that just such an 'orgy of feeling has to be *paid* for afterward'. This is because '[the] chief trick the ascetic priest permitted himself for making the human soul resound with heart-rending, ecstatic music of all kinds was … the exploitation of the *sense of guilt*.' The priest is 'that artist in guilt feelings' who is able to make us feel 'sin', the understanding that our suffering is punishment for our own guilt. (*GM* III, 20) Wagner offers the promise of community, of belonging, to those who crave it. He gives them instead the self-indulgent, emotionally onanistic *effect* of community without the actuality; but the price to be paid in guilty conscience for this fake effect is real.

Strauss's Nietzsche

The ferocity of Nietzsche's polemic betrays the awe in which he still held Wagner: the music is so dangerous because it is so successful at what it does. Initially, Youmans's claim that Strauss accepted and incorporated Nietzsche's later anti-Schopenhauerian, anti-Wagnerian thought into his music seems odd when the case against Strauss – particularly the charges of deception, wearing masks, cultivating theatrical sense at the expense of musical sense – is so similar to Nietzsche's case against Wagner. But actually Youmans's argument about Nietzsche's influence on Strauss is more shrewd.

As John Daverio has noted, 'nothing that Strauss wrote in letters, sketches and programmes actually spelled out a coherent system of thought dependent upon Nietzsche'.[23] Even Willi Schuh, who Youmans characterizes as 'Strauss's tireless and faithful defender', was of the opinion that he 'did not possess what it would have taken to get thoroughly and comprehensively to grips with Schopenhauer'.[24] The impression had much to do with his unwillingness to engage in philosophical discussions, dismissing early critics of *Also sprach Zarathustra*, Op. 30 (1896), like Max Marschalk and Ferdinand

[23] John Daverio, 'Richard Strauss's *Also sprach Zarathustra* and the "Union" of Poetry and Philosophy', *Nineteenth-Century Music and the German Romantic Ideology* (New York: Schirmer, 1993).
[24] Charles Youmans, 'The Role of Nietzsche in Richard Strauss's Development', *The Journal of Musicology* 21(3) (2005), 309-42, 310. Schuh quoted in Stephen Hefling, 'Miners Digging from Opposite Sides: Mahler, Strauss, and the Problem of Program Music', *Richard Strauss: New Perspectives on the Composer and his Music*, ed. Bryan Gilliam (Durham: Duke University Press, 1992), 44.

Pfohl, who thought the work could be understood philosophically.[25] However, despite Strauss's stated opinion that 'philosophy' could not be 'translated directly into tones', the work arose out of a ten-year study of Schopenhauer's *Der Welt als Wille und Vorstellung* (1818; rev. expanded 1848) followed by an intense engagement with Nietzsche after becoming disillusioned with the Wagner project.[26] Youmans provides good evidence for believing that, as well as *Zarathustra*, Strauss had read *Jenseits von Gut und Böse*, *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches* and *Die Geburt der Tragödie* between 1892 and 1896.[27]

Youmans's main claim is that Nietzsche figured prominently in Strauss's 'musical coming of age'. *Guntram* (1894) represented Strauss's first turning away from 'Wagnerian musical metaphysics', although it cannot yet be considered Nietzschean.[28] The tone poems and symphonies from *Till Eulenspiegel's lustige Streiche* (1895) through *to Eine Alpensinfonie* (1915) then 'bear witness to an intensifying Nietzschean outlook'.[29] According to Youmans, Strauss's interest in Nietzsche centred around four specific concerns. Firstly, he needed 'justification of a positive, affirmative conception of physicality'; secondly, he required 'a compelling argument for the special status of the artist'; thirdly, confirmation that 'free will did not exist'; and fourthly, that 'the will was an affirmative force'.[30] This then had a number of consequences for Strauss's artistic development, namely the affirmation in his music of the material (i.e. non-metaphysical) through mimesis of aspects of the physical, including the unashamed portrayal of sex. This was carried forward into the operas: *Der Rosenkavalier* (1911) famously opens with a musical portrait of the Marschalin and Octavian's moment of *jouissance*, whose graphic physicality is in pointed contrast to spirituality of the parallel music in *Tristan und Isolde*. He also suggests that, although Strauss initially found Nietzsche's discussion of southern music 'comical', his move to a lighter style after *Elektra* (1909) may have had something to do with the Nietzschean influence.[31]

There can be little doubt that Strauss was 'as prodigiously talented musician, as gifted as anyone he ever knew' – one just needs to compare his best work with that of his contemporaries to realize that. But The Case of Strauss can not be solved by simply saying that 'Strauss's avant-garde authenticity and a defining trait of his artistic output' was an 'irony' that '[undermined] an idealism shared by

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[25] Max Marschalk, 'Frei nach Nietzsche', *Die Zukunft* 17 (1896), 617: quoted in Julia Liebscher, *Richard Strauss,* Also sprach Zarathustra. *Tondichtung (frei nach Friedr. Nietzsche) für grosses Orchester* op. 30 (Munich: W. Fink, 1994), 105. Ferdinand Pfohl, '[Review of *Also sprach Zarathustra*]', *Hamburger Nachtrichten*, 3 December 1896; quoted in Walter Werbeck, *Die Tondichtungen von Richard Strauss* (Tutzing: Hans Schneider, 1996), 254.

[26] The ten-year study of Schopenhauer is evidenced in his correspondence with Ludwig Thuille and Cosima Wagner. See Youmans, 'Nietzsche in Strauss's Development', 311. He was encouraged to read Schopenhauer by his early mentor Alexander Ritter.

[27] The main source material is the correspondence between Strauss and his friend Friedrich Rösch and housed in the Richard-Strauss-Archiv.

[28] Youmans, 'Nietzsche in Strauss's Development', 314. Also see Charles Youmans, *Richard Strauss's* Guntram *and the Dismantling of Wagnerian Musical Metaphysics* (Ph.D. diss., Duke Univ., 1996).

[29] Youmans, 'Nietzsche in Strauss's Development', 311.

[30] Youmans, 'Nietzsche in Strauss's Development', 320.

[31] He uses the word 'comical' in a letter to Cosima, quoted Youmans, 'Nietzsche in Strauss's Development', 322. See also, 326, 342.

Wagner and Brahms'.[32] The corollary of this would be that a great artist is a great artist and all those people who his music angered – and continues to anger – just don't get the irony. The problem here is twofold: (1) since there was a tradition of music providing visions of the metaphysical, audiences were primed to see them; (2) it is precisely because Strauss was such a 'prodigiously talented musician' that, notwithstanding any intentional irony, contemporaries were actually able to achieve spiritual/aesthetic feeling through his work. Anyone so moved who later realizes that it is the result of deliberate fakery – especially if it was meant to be ironic – is going to feel manipulated, cheated and angry – just as Nietzsche did when he realized that Wagner's music did not allow visions of the *Urgrund* but was itself the result of psychological trickery. To domesticate Strauss's whole oeuvre as just another, now acceptable, type of modernism is to throw away what is valuable about the critique of his music. The reason both Wagner and Strauss's music has been so problematic is not a question of whether they were 'prodigiously talented'. Instead, its danger has been that it has been perceived as both aesthetically good and morally bad at the same time. Youmans's ability to seem to take seriously Oscar Wilde's aestheticist pose – that '[there] is no such thing as a moral or an immoral book', only those that are 'well written, or badly written' – says more about art's lack of value in our own time than it does about the struggle of modernists to prevent precisely the current situation arising.[33]

What about *Arabella*? Because of Strauss's reticence in aesthetic and philosophical matters, a deal of interpretative license is required in order to say what the composer was doing in his operas. However, given the importance of Nietzsche's philosophy in Strauss's formative years, the interpretation in this part is always grounded in Nietzsche's post-*BT* writings. This is appropriate because, as I mine Hofmannsthal's other work for clues on what *Arabella* is about it will become clear that the libretto itself is replete with ideas that Hofmannsthal himself lifted directly from Nietzsche. There is no such thing as a unified Nietzschean position on art, and no sense that he had come to a final conclusion before the madness set in. This is not a problem because, while *Arabella* borrows liberally from Nietzsche, in the end it carves out its own *sui generis* response to the impinging nihilism.

POST-APOCALYPTIC FICTION

After his youthful incarnation as a poet, Hofmannsthal's literary career is usually divided into two distinct periods. Following Michael Steinberg, I shall refer to the first, up until the outbreak of war in 1914 as the 'apocalyptic' and the second as the 'reconstructive'.[34] This chronology was introduced by the author himself in the problematic *Ad me ipsum* (1930), a set of notes, written from 1916 onwards, in which

[32] Charles Youmans, 'Strauss and the Nature of Music', *The Cambridge Companion to Richard Strauss, ed. Charles Youmans* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 280-93; 292-93.
[33] Oscar Wilde, 'Author's Preface', *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890). Full text available online. Oscar Wilde's sayings are meant to shake up comfortable moral certainties - but his motivation is always highly moral.
[34] Michael P. Steinberg, 'Allegory and Authority in the Work of Hugo Hofmannsthal', *The Meaning of the Salzburg Festival* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990), 142-63.

he attempted to explain his work to the public.[35] The periods are marked by differing attitudes towards the political function of art. has observed, The standard view of fin-de-siècle Viennese aestheticism, elaborated most eloquently by Carl Schorske, is that it did not have the political animus it did elsewhere in Europe, but instead became a substitute for political action for the whole bourgeoisie: 'art became almost a religion, the source of meaning and the food of the soul, as civic action proved increasingly futile'.[36] Hofmannsthal's pre-war poetry and drama is not simply escapist in this manner, rather it draws attention to its own impotence in the face of impending disaster – in this way it is like a 'seismograph registering the tremors shaking his culture'.[37]

When the country emerged much weakened from the war, it caused him to envision a more active role for his art, specifically in helping to reshape Austrian identity. The ideology he wished to promote, that of a 'conservative revolution', was developed in a series of speeches, letters and essays written during the war, many in his official capacity as an Austrian cultural ambassador. The focus of this project became the Salzburg Festival, of which Hofmannsthal was the 'principal intellectual founder'.[38] The Festival was always intended to be a popular venture, capitalizing on Mozart's association with the city, and the Catholic morality plays, *Jedermann* (1911) and *Das Salzburger große Welttheater* (1922), were written to appeal to a broad audience from a wide variety of backgrounds. The plays and operas of the late 10s and the 20s, including *Arabella*, were aimed at a more highbrow audience, but were nevertheless motivated by the same reconstructive agenda and influenced by the idea of theatre as ritual.

Given Nietzsche's ideological critique of operas like *Tristan* and *Parsifal* (1882), this surely would have posed a problem for both Hofmannsthal and Strauss in *Arabella*. On one hand, the opera is propagating an essentialist version of Austrian national character coupled with a totalizing vision for re-establishing *völkisch* ideals in the modern state. Moreover, Hofmannsthal seems to have been using the sort of ritual processes to structure the opera that are supposedly able to engender a sense of belonging and thereby able to install the symbols and myths being presented as ideology. On the other, Nietzsche had argued, firstly, that there are as many universalizing discourses as there are groups of people with a shared interest; and, secondly, that the attempt to impose just one of these on the individual through the skilled use of techniques derived from religious practice is not only mendacious, but dangerous.

However the localized *political* ideology that Hofmannsthal was advocating in *Arabella* should not be mistaken for the universal *absolute* truths about the human condition that Wagner was attempt-

[35] For an explanation of some the difficulties this work poses for interpreting Hofmannsthal's oeuvre, see Ellen Ritter, 'Hofmannsthal's Narrative Prose: The Problem of Individuation' in *A Companion to the Works of Hugo von Hofmannsthal*, ed. Thomas A. Kovach (Rochester NY: Camden House, 2002), particularly pages 75-7.
[36] Carl E. Schorske, *Fin-de-siècle Vienna: Politics and Culture* (New York: Knopf, 1980), 9. This assessment is currently being re-assessed, see for example: Steven Beller (ed.), *Rethinking Vienna 1900* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2001).
[37] In 'Der Dichter und Dieser Zeit'.
[38] Steinberg, 'Salzburg Festival', 142.

ing to stage in his operas. Hofmannsthal's essays about the festival in which he supplies it with, what W. E. Yates calls, 'a consistent ideological rationale' and the *Tendenzliteratur* aspect of his post-war work has been rightly criticized from the outset.[39] As Yates points out, echoing Karl Kraus's contemporaneous criticisms, the rationale for the Festival is anything but 'consistent'. Salzburg wasn't the bearer of an Austrian tradition – it had only been Austrian for 100 years. It wasn't cosmopolitan but provincial – the local populace were only interested in a Mozart Festival. Rather than bringing together an 'autochthonous' public steeped in Austro-Bavarian culture. It provided touristic entertainment for honeymooning American couples. And it was neither especially productive during medieval times nor a bastion of baroque theatre. What the town had going for it was a picturesque location in the mountains and plenty of baroque architecture, lending credence to the notion that the baroque had actually been recreated. The Festival could serve as an archetype for what Hobsbawm has termed the 'invention of tradition'.[40]

Many, like C.E Williams and Michael P. Steinberg, have drawn on Hermann Broch's incisive Hofmannsthal essay to provide ammunition in their attack on the plays.[41] Williams complains that the

> archaic language of Hofmannsthal's morality plays, their *faux-naif* allegories, their attempts to meet the challenge of the modern world merely by reasserting the very values which history had called into question, convey less an authentic popular wisdom than a bid for popularity.[42]

Steinberg is similarly harsh on Hofmannsthal's increasingly fixed ideology and the use of allegory which, because of its unambiguous nature, he sees as inferior to his more metaphorical use of symbols in earlier work and in the contemporary operas:

> In Hofmannsthal's late, ideological practice of allegory, imaginary constructions achieve social and political relevance through determine and definite structures of reference.[43]

As for the ideology that is being presented in the works, Thomas Mann warned Hofmannsthal how easily his *völkisch* utopianism, as outlined in the notorious 'Literature as the Spiritual Space of the Nation', could be misinterpreted as sanctioning the brutal curb on individual liberty that the ultra-rightwing parties were campaigning for.[44] This is one of the reasons the essay, and by extension his work, has

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[39] W. E. Yates, *Schnitzler, Hofmannsthal, and the Austrian Theatre* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1992), 204.
[40] Ibid., 201-217. Eric Hobsbawm, 'Introduction: Inventing Traditions', in *The Invention of Tradition*, ed. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 1-14.
[41] The only available version of the essay in English is translated by Steinberg. Hermann Broch, 'Hofmannsthal and his Time: Art and Its Non-Style at the End of the Ninteenth Century' in *Geist and Zeitgeist: The Spirit in and Unspiritual Age*, ed. John Hargraves (New York: Counterpoint, 2002), 141-210.
[42] C. E. Williams, *The Broken Eagle: The Politics of Austrian Literature from Empire to Anschluss* (London: Paul Elek, 1974), 10.
[43] Steinberg, 'Salzburg Festival', 144.
[44] Klemens von Klemperer, *Germany's New Conservatism: Its History and Dilemma In the Twentieth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957).

been considered proto-fascist, although, as far as individual culpability goes, the worst he can be accused of is political naïveté.[45]

Steinberg argues that the operas of the 'reconstructive period' are superior to the plays because the ideological content is more ambiguous. Following the crisis of language, given its most concise expression in the Chandos Letter, the libretti 'incorporate, so to speak, the awareness that they do not stand alone as linguistic documents'. Then 'by grounding dramatic content within the symbolic system of music, a system that absolutely lacks the object-world to which language refers […], Hofmannsthal preserved the indefinability of the referent which is necessary for a true metaphor'. The plays, by contrast, trade in allegory, 'to the level where the object-world is argued to be definable, in other worlds to the level of ideology'.[46] Later in the chapter he says that Strauss, as a self-confessed Nietzschean, bases his style on the Dionysian principle of movement which acts as an anti-ideological counter to Hofmannsthal's Apollonian belief in a static, mythologized past.[47]

There is much to disagree with here. Firstly, *Arabella* is replete with fixed ideological content and the symbols, while they cannot be simply read like a language, do circumscribe a determinate space within which meaning must lie. The opera is just as ideological, in this sense, as the plays. Secondly, Hofmannsthal's language crisis is *metaphysical*. He accepts the Nietzschean position that concepts such as the 'Kantian subject' or 'God' or 'Beauty' are illusions, but experiences them as if they were real. How does a person talk about things that he knows do not exist when he experiences them as if they do? And lastly, the idea that Strauss added, or tried and failed to add, the missing spiritual component to Hofmannsthal's baroque structures has led to repeated misunderstanding his operatic music. Strauss was just as sensitive as Hofmannsthal to the prevailing intellectual prohibition on the representation of religious experience. All of this will be explored in more detail as the discussion unfolds in Chapters 6-8.

So, the ideology in *Arabella* is based on a jumbled confection of pseudo-tradition, is easily confused with more pernicious forms of rightist politics and is presented more or less unambiguously. Not only that, it was also obsolete by the time of the opera's first performance in 1933. What is innovative, or at least aesthetically interesting, about the work, however, is not its 'reconstructive' ideology but its reconstruction of the ritual process through which ideology, as symbol and myth, is staged. The process, enacted by the opera as ritual theatre as well as self-reflexively in its content, is able to accommodate the particular belief system without tyrannically imposing it as universal. As for Strauss's music, firstly, it traces out the ritual process over the course of the opera – particularly in the three act fina-

[45] Adorno saw aestheticism, including Hofmannsthal's contribution, in this way. See Thomas A. Kovach, 'Introduction: Hofmannsthal Today' in *A Companion to the Works of Hugo von Hofmannsthal*, ed. Thomas A. Kovach (Rochester NY: Camden House, 2002), 11-12. Fritz Stern implicates Hofmannsthal in the cultural roots of fascism by quoting him in the introduction to *The Politics of Cultural Despair: A Study in the Rise of the Germanic Ideology* [1961] (Berkeley: California University Press, 1974), xv. Williams profitably compares Hofmannsthal with Eliot, who held similar views except, Williams maintains, Eliot was aware of the potential political dangers. Williams, *Broken Eagle*, 14-15.

[46] Steinberg, *Salzburg Festival*, 151-2.

[47] Steinberg, *Salzburg Festival*, 162.

les. Secondly rather than adding a non-referential, non-symbolic complement to Hofmannsthal's symbolism, it reinforces the affective component of the symbols and the symbolic interplay. That is, the music references particular emotional configurations that are just as much part of the culture, and just as available for negotiation, as any symbols or linguistic concepts operational in other dimensions of the opera. The ritual that Hofmannsthal and Strauss are constructing here can be situated within the contemporaneous models of religion by anthropologists such as Durkheim, Rudolf Otto, Arnold van Gennep and psychologists and sociologists like Freud, Weber and Jung that shaped the subsequent twentieth-century discourse. Indeed, it is because the opera resonates so powerfully with modern notions of what ritual is – including the prevalent idea that it is somehow natural, beneficial or even necessary – that helps to account for its success.[48]

[48] Bell, *Ritual Theory*, 19-29.

The Word is not Enough

One of the standard explanations for Hofmannsthal's desire to write operas is that he felt that words were inadequate for aesthetic (or art-religious) expression and he thought that music could supply the transcendent element that was missing. His early symbolist poetry was an attempt to gesture towards the metaphysical – a literary version of Wagnerian music, which was meant to represent (or in some sense actually bring the listener into contact with) the thing-in-itself or the *Wille*, in the Schopenhauerian terms Wagner was working with in his mature phase. The 'Letter of Lord Chandos' ('Ein Brief,1902) was Hofmannsthal's admission of the impossibility – or even the undesirability – of this artistic goal. However, in his 1927 address 'Literature as the Spiritual Space of the Nation' ('Das Schrifttum als geistiger Raum des Nation', delivered 10 January 1927 at the University of Munich, published July 1927), written just before beginning work on *Arabella*, his mature reflection was that 'literature' could indeed perform a spiritual function after all: not the Dionysian function of Wagnerian opera (and his earlier symbolist poetry), in which unity is achieved by breaking down the division between individual souls, but instead achieving unity in the outer communal world through a shared language.[1] Hofmannsthal here uses 'literature' in its broader German sense not to mean just the pile of books that even the educated elite haven't yet found the time to absorb completely but rather a 'spiritual activity' – constituted of all linguistic utterance – that lies beside, outside, beneath, and above professional literature which could serve as the 'spiritual room' in which the German-speaking nation would be formed. Language is not inadequate; language is all there is.

[1] Hugo von Hofmannsthal, *Gesammelte Werke in zehn Einzelbänden*, Reden und Aufsätze 1–3. Band 3, (Frankfurt a.M., Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag ,1979).

The function of the artist, as a Nietzschean 'seeker' – a term borrowed from the *Untimely Meditations* (*Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen*, 1876), is to internalize all the contradictions of the culture in order to present an outer unified reality that can serve as the mythological basis for the nation. Michael Steinberg has pointed out – quite rightly – that there is nothing Nietzschean about Hofmannsthal's attempt to imagine a fixed, eternal mythology for the Germans and that Nietzsche had a more 'Dionysian' view of culture as 'historical and dynamic'.[2] For Steinberg, the Hofmannsthal-Strauss collaborations (particularly *Arabella*) are successful because Strauss's avowedly Nietzschean music – basing 'his compositional style on the principle of Dionysian movement' – cuts across Hofmannsthal's attempts to present a static ideology. Actually Hofmannsthal's mythology is much more subtle than this: it is designed to appear static in the present – as myth must do to be myth – but is empty enough of real content to allow for continual cultural change. This is something that will come out of the argument in Chapter 8. Here I want to challenge the idea that Hofmannsthal's libretto is Apollonian and Strauss's music is Dionysian – i.e. that the opera functions in essentially the same way as its Wagnerian precedents. In Wagner's metaphysical conception, music is aligned with a higher reality – the Schopenhauerian *Wille* – through which it is able to communicate the deeper universal truth behind that lies behind the words. Music allows a glimpse of the infinite as the comparison between the multiplicity of possible myths contained in the Ur-myth in the music comes into contact with the specificity of the single myth enacted on the stage and in the words. I argue that what Hofmannsthal achieves in *Arabella* is an 'outer Dionysian' aesthetic, in opposition to Wagner's 'inner Dionysian' aesthetic, so that the unity that the individual was supposed to feel in being subsumed into the *Wille* – through full immersion in the music – is now brought into the linguistic sphere. This is done through allegorical symbology, the invention of mythical worlds that obscure contradictions, and the enactment of both of these through time in ritual.

WORD

After his precocious success as a teenage poet, Hofmannsthal reached a crisis point early in his career when he realized that language had become so completely colonized by scientific thought – or means-end rationality – that even the temporary, artificial respite afforded by symbolist poetry was no longer possible. This '*Sprachkrise*', already evident in Hofmannsthal's early poetry and lyric dramas, found its clearest expression in the much discussed 'Letter of Lord Chandos' ('Ein Brief', 1902).[3] The fictional letter concerns the ontological status of language, and asks to what extent language is able to express or represent what a human experiences as real – particularly the sense of Self and that of belonging to a Higher Order. Neither the letter's date, 1603, nor its addressee, Francis Bacon, are coincidental.

[2] Hofmannsthal borrowed this interpretation from Ernst Bertram's *Nietzsche: Versuch einer Mythologie* (1918): Michael P. Steinberg, *The Meaning of the Salzburg Festival* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990), 161.

[3] The *Sprachkrise* was a more general Viennese phenomenon that affected many intellectuals, the most famous being Karl Kraus and Ludwig Wittgenstein. I suggested two converging reasons for it in Part I: the misuse of language in newspapers twisting stories to suit their backer's commercial interests (a concern of Kraus); and the mathematical turn in physics (more of an influence on Wittgenstein). Hofmannsthal's perspective reveals a third reason.

The date is bang in the middle of the scientific Scientific Revolution, for which the dates 1543-1687 are as good as any.[4] (In Foucault's archaeology, this was the period when language, previously a system of signs with a direct links to their object through the divine order, was transformed into a system of arbitrary signifiers that each represent a real-world signified.[5]) Bacon is credited with the invention of the 'scientific method', what he called the 'novum organum', in which knowledge is determined through inductive reasoning based on empirical observation.[6] Bacon still believed in God – or at least it was politically exigent for him to claim he did – but argued for a separation between empirically determined facts and knowledge based on faith: 'the more discordant, therefore, and incredible, the divine mystery is, the more honour is shown to God in believing it, and the nobler is the victory of faith'.[7] By addressing the letter to Bacon, Hofmannsthal is indicating that the separation of scientific and symbolic thought that he sees at the root of the current language crisis were bequeathed by him.

The fictional author of 'Ein Brief' is ironically able to express with complete lucidity the linguistic paradox that, although he feels deeply the integrity of his inner self, he knows that any attempt to express it in words is doomed. He talks of his constant 'inner inscrutable self' while doubting whether the ego of today is the same as yesterday – 'I hardly know whether I am still the same person to whom your precious letter is addressed'.[8] What he calls a 'disease of my mind' results in momentary intensities in which he experiences deep spiritual communion with the universe, usually triggered by the most trivial of occurrences.[9] A beetle swimming upturned in a can of water results in 'a shudder at the presence of the infinite'.[10] In these moments he has the Dionysian ability to see the unity behind all things, feeling an 'immense sympathy' with other living creatures, and able to grasp the meaning of everything, 'as if we could enter into a new and hopeful relationship with the whole of existence if only we begin to think with the heart'.[11] At the same time as this, in his ordinary life, he has 'lost completely the ability to think or to speak of anything coherently'.[12] At first he could not utter the words ' "spirit", "soul", or "body" '; later the abstract words necessary to express an opinion, and finally even the neighbourhood gossip of others started to seem 'as indemonstrable, as mendacious and hollow as could be'.[13] In contrast to

[4] My dates for the Scientific Revolution are the publication dates of Copernicus's *De revolutionibus orbium coelestium*, and Newton's *Philosophiæ Naturalis Principia Mathematica* respectively.
[5] Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* [1966], translator not credited (New York: Vintage, 1994).
[6] 'Men have sought to make a world from their own conception and to draw from their own minds all the material which they employed, but if, instead of doing so, they had consulted experience and observation, they would have the facts and not opinions to reason about, and might have ultimately arrived at the knowledge of the laws which govern the material world'. Francis Bacon, *The New Organum*, ed. Lisa Jardine & Michael Silverthorne (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000).
[7] Francis Bacon, *De augmentis*, *Works of Francis Bacon*, ed. James Spedding et al, Vol. 9 (Boston: Taggard & Thompson, 1864), 346.
[8] 'unbegreiflichen Inneren'; 'ich'; 'Kaum weiß ich, ob ich noch derselbe bin, an den Ihr kostbarer Brief sich wendet'.
[9] 'eine Krankheit meines Geistes'.
[10] 'Gegenwart des Unendlichen durchschauert'.
[11] 'ungeheures Anteilnehmen'; 'Oder als Könnten wir in ein neues, ahnungsvolles Verhältnis zum ganzen Dasein treten, wenn wir anfingen, mit dem Herzen zu denken'.
[12] 'Es ist mir völlig die Fähigkeit abhanden gekommen, über irgend etwas zusammenhängend zu denken oder zu sprechen'.
[13] ' "Geist", "Seele" oder "Körper" '; 'so unbeweisbar, so lügenhaft, so löcherig wie nur möglich'.

the moments of spiritual illumination, when attempting to understand the speech of others, 'everything disintegrated into parts, those parts again into parts; no longer would anything let itself be encompassed by one idea'.[14]

Hofmannsthal's own way around this condition was to invent a pared-down metaphysic that incorporated positivist thinking – even the prohibition on metaphysics – in order to turn it into a virtue. The soul is no longer a Cartesian 'ghost in the machine', to borrow Gilbert Ryle's phrase, but consists of the separation between that part of us that observes and the part we observe: 'the soul is inexhaustible because it is at once both observer and object'.[15] The attempt to achieve Dionysian unity, to transcend the infinite and finite parts of our nature, would only bring chaos in which nothing is distinguishable.[16] Instead, although plurality is the cause of all suffering (Schopenhauer's *principium individuationis*), we should not see it is not something to be transcended, but essential in making us what we are and the source of the ' "magic" in our nature'.[17] As Benjamin Bennett puts it:

> Our true universal self, in order to exist, requires self-consciousness, hence self-separation, internal disharmony, a finite aspect, a limited situation in the imperfect real world. The real world is thus an inescapable consequence and product of the self's own internal dynamics.[18]

'Self-transcendence' is achieved, paradoxically, by accepting that it is our essential non-transcendence that makes us who we are: we overcome ourselves by learning that we do not need to overcome our divided selves. Bennett again:

> If the transcendent truth of the self is achieved only by a commitment of the self to finite existence, then that commitment must be made unreservedly; for the sake of the achievement of self-transcendence, we must firmly renounce the idea, however attractive and ultimately true it might be.[19]

The consequence of this distinctly Nietzschean embrace of reality and suffering is that striving for the Infinite in art becomes a betrayal of the equally important finite part of our being. But on the other hand, attempting a synthesis between finite and infinite would look like a misguided attempt to overcome our defining plurality. And so the only choice left to the artist is an unconditional affirmation of reality.

Hofmannsthal's letters to Strauss about *Arabella* demonstrate what this abstract philosophizing means in practice. Hofmannsthal tries to create a believable *Spielwelt* in which a workable 'configuration' ['gestalt'] of characters is assembled. As he explains:

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[14] 'Es zerfiel mir alles in Teile, die Teile wieder in Teile und nichts mehr ließ sich mit einem Begriff umspannen'.
[15] Hugo von Hofmannsthal, *Gesammelte Werke* in Einzelausgaben, Vol 11: Prosa I, ed. Herbert Steiner (Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer Verlag, 1956), 8.
[16] Benjamin Bennett, *Hugo Hofmannsthal: The Theatres of Consciousness* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1988), 12-3. His argument is based on a close reading of Hofmannsthal's early notes.
[17] Bennett, *Theatres*, 11.
[18] Bennett, *Theatres*, 15.
[19] Bennett, *Theatres*, 15-6.

> In a well conceived dramatic plan certain motifs have their place and their interplay makes up the charm of the whole piece. … It is an entity, whose complete animated world can only gain life as it is shaped by the poet, because in a good stage text characters and action are wholly one. The behaviour of the protagonists in each situation, and the situation itself are after all governed by the "being thus and no other" of every character.[20]

The archetypal model he has in mind for *Arabella* was *Meistersinger*, to which *Rosenkavalier* owed so much. He believes that this is because the Nuremburg of the 1830s that Wagner had contact with 'offered not merely a mirror, but actually an example of the whole intellectual and spiritual life of the German middle class around 1500'.

> This is what gives the opera its indestructible truth: that it brings to life again a genuine, complete world which did exist – not like *Lohengrin* and *Tannhäuser* or even the *Ring* … imaginary or excogitated worlds that have not existed anywhere. This is the so-to-speak Homeric element in *Meistersinger* … this is what makes it so firm and solid and un-ageing.[21]

The implication is that, having been born in 1874, he is close to having had direct experience of the world he is trying to recreate in *Arabella*. The horror with which he reacted to Strauss's suggestion for a 'colossal Croatian ballet' in the second act shows his commitment to verisimilitude. '[It] is exactly the decisive point that everything must be authentic, the authentic Vienna of 1860s, just as *Rosenkavalier* owes some part of its success to the fact that it is throughout the authentic Vienna of 1740'.[22] It is not discussed in the correspondence, but the aim of creating a believable world even extended to set and costume design which aimed at complete fidelity to the period in question.[23] However, the characters were his primary concern:

> Every detail will have to flow naturally from the life of the characters, for only thus is the life-like, breathing quality kindled which has kept Rosenkavalier fresh for some twenty years now … . […] The richest pattern results not from an accumulation of characters, but from showing the given characters in their manifold relations with each other.[24]

Although, as will become apparent, genuine dramatic tension was not part of Hofmannsthal's plan for *Arabella*, he does want the characters to grow out of their 'contrapuntal' interactions with others. There seems, then, to have been a complete rejection of the lyricism earlier poetry: everything is geared towards a mimetic, albeit highly stylized, recreation of a real world.

The opera, however, is very far from being realistic. This not just because of the music and the apparently trivial point that sung theatre cannot be perceived as real. The lyric-affective mode which depicts the characters' internal emotional states is no less realistic than the words on the page in a

[20] Hofmannsthal to Strauss, 22 December 1927, *Correspondence*, 461.
[21] Hofmannsthal to Strauss, 1 July 1927 , *Correspondence* , 433.
[22] Hofmannsthal, 22 December 1927, *Correspondence* , 463. He seems to have temporarily forgotten about those inauthentic Mozartesque wind serenades and Johan-Straussesque waltzes here.
[23] Reproductions of the designs for the original sets and costumes can be found in Birkin (1989).
[24] Hofmannsthal to Strauss, 5 August 1928, *Correspondence*, 500-1.

psychological-realist novel.[25] Also, Hofmannsthal was keen that the music be as understated as possible, with the singers leading and the orchestra in a subordinate role. Strauss obliged and further contributed to the sense of realism by having the vocal line follow the natural speech patterns of the language. [26] The objection to the use of the term 'realism' is that Hofmannsthal uses dialogue and staging to externalize the consequences of the metaphysical system outlined above.

One way he does this is encapsulated by his well-known dictum: 'Depth must be hidden. Where? On the surface'.[27] This is followed in *Arabella* by keeping the atmosphere so light that what are actually deep philosophical points sparkle in the conversations as mere witticisms. A good example is Elemer's epigrammatic 'Nachdenken ist der Tod: im Nichtbedenken liegt das Glück!', which is discussed later. Another way is summed up by another aphorism, which seems to contradict the encomia to authenticity in the letters: 'Naturalism distorts Nature because by copying the surface it has to neglect the wealth of inner relatedness – Nature's real mysterium'.[28] This inner relatedness is conveyed through symbol, myth and the rituals that reinforce them. Everything in the libretto has symbolic meaning – the characters, their actions, their positioning on stage, the props they handle and what they talk about.

SYMBOL

In Hofmannsthal's poetic symbolism – inspired by George, Mallarmé, and ultimately Wagner – the meaning of the symbol is deliberately obscured using elliptical, melodic language in order to evoke a dreamlike psychological state. In this '*état d'âme*', or 'condition of the soul', one is supposedly able to understand the inner meaning of things which are beyond expression in ordinary language.[29] This differs from religious symbolism, where the symbol represents, reveals or is an actual manifestation of a supernatural being or force in the mundane world. It may have an identifiable referent, but often it has the power to achieve something – physical, social or psychological – in which case its power becomes its meaning. But the symbols in Arabella are not those of symbolist poetry where meaning is purposely kept ambiguous and distant. And they certainly don't have the direct spiritual connection with what they represent, like the sacramental wine and bread in a Catholic mass. Instead they function allegorically so that, although they cannot be read with the precision of a linguistic signifier, each symbol opens up a loosely circumscribed space of meaning. Thus, Hofmannsthal's minimalist metaphysics, in which transcendence is not only rejected but assigned negative value, gives rise to a minimalist art that doesn't ape religion by attempting to trigger a spiritual response in the auditor. Instead, this type of symbolism, and the myth and ritual that are built out of it, has the more modest aim of trying to communicate the

[25] The lyric-affective mode is where the music communicates to the audience the emotions of the figures on stage. The lyric mode, as used in Hofmannsthal's early poetry, refers to the first person portrayal of a subjective experience.
[26] See Hofmannsthal to Strauss, 26 July 1928, *Correspondence*, 495.
[27] Hofmannsthal, 'Book of Friends', 362.
[28] Hofmannsthal, 'Book of Friends', 374.
[29] William Rees (ed.), *The Penguin Book of French Poetry: 1820-1950* (London: Penguin Books, 1990), 363.

magical nature of being without pretending to represent anything other than the ordinary domain of sensual apprehension.

When anthropologists use the term 'symbolic' they mean something that in rational scientific terms is 'false' or demonstrably ineffective.[30] However, only the outsider is capable of making this determination: for the insider no distinction is made between symbolic and effective action.[31] It has been argued that attributing meaning to the actions or the extrasomatic objects used in ritual is an imposition of the outsider's own semiological ideology.[32] For some groups religion is instrumental and not about interpretation: its members are not interested in why something works or the meanings of the symbols involved, just that it does.[33] The reason Hofmannsthal is forced into rethinking the way symbols are used in works like *Arabella*, is the modern person's inability to apprehend the world without dichotomizing it into symbolic and rational thought, or other equivalent binary pair.[34] The consequence of this is that it is impossible to apprehend the world in the manner of the non-moderns in Holy's argument, that is without natural and supernatural (or profane and sacred) planes being crystallized out into oppositional pairs.

Hofmannsthal first conceived of (the operatic) Arabella as an idealized version of the young women of his day, an example that he hoped they would want to emulate. He made this didactic intent clear to Strauss:

> [Arabella] is not a woman, but a young girl, a thoroughly mature, wide awake young girl conscious of her strength and of the hazards she runs, completely mistress of the situation – in other words rather like a very young woman and entirely in a modern character. She is in fact the type of young female who appeals nowadays; it is the job of a good tailor not to copy the old fashion but to help create the new. Such intelligent and self-assured young girls are Bernard Shaw's best figures; his St. Joan is one of them.[35]

That he wanted her to embody feisty self-confidence is also shown by his likening the Arabella-Zdenka pairing to Carmen-Michela: 'one extremely dazzling, the other very meek and gentle'.[36] A few days after writing the second of these two letters, however, he hit upon the feature of Arabella that would make her distinct from her antecedents:

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[30] Dan Sperber, *Rethinking Symbolism*, trans. Alice L. Morton (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1975), 3.
[31] A good example of this is in the ritual surrounding the consumption of red wine. Scientists have proved that allowing the wine to breath even for 24 hours makes no discernable difference to the taste, but ritual is carried out anyway because it adds to the mystic aura thereby improving the pleasure of drinking the wine. Scientists, therefore, have proved nothing about the qualitative feeling of the experience.
[32] Sperber, *Rethinking Symbolism*, 83-4. See also John Skorupski, *Symbol and Theory: A Philosophical Study of Theories of Religion in Social Anthropology* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1976).
[33] Ladislav Holy, *Religion and Custom in a Muslim Society: The Berti of Sudan* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1991), 210.
[34] This tendency is demonstrated, for example, in the essay 'Concerning Two Kinds of Thinking' in Carl Jung, *Psychology of the Unconscious: A Study of the Transformations and Symbolisms of the Libido*, trans. Beatrice M. Hinkle (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1916), which Hofmannsthal had in his library.
[35] Hofmannsthal to Strauss, 22 December 1927, *Correspondence*, 460.
[36] Hofmannsthal to Strauss, 20 November 1927, *Correspondence*, 455.

> But then it occurred to me, in a flash, a distinct, very pregnant situation for Arabella. She is a mature and beautiful girl who has probed too deeply into certain aspects of life, a little seared by cynicism and resignation, she is ready to enter into an arid *mariage de convenance* (with a man who never appears on the stage at all).[37]

Although the building contractor, who was to be the partner in this marriage of convenience, was lost in subsequent reworking, her being forced to marry out of a sense of duty to her family is retained. Her character turns on a contradiction: her most attractive qualities – knowing her own mind, being in control of her situation, and a willingness to take risks – do not square with her decision to sacrifice her own self-interest for that of her wastrel parents.

This odd combination of headstrongness and passivity, in which she knows exactly what she wants but just sits around waiting for it to happen, can make her character seem aloof and unreasonable. And it needs a good performance from the soprano to keep the audience sympathetic, especially in the scenes with Zdenka and Elemer in the first act. In the former scene, she becomes upset when she realizes that some flowers are not from the mysterious foreigner she has seen on the street, but from Matteo. In the latter scene, she chides Elemer, and the other two counts, for their inability to make her fall in love with one of them. All this male attention, for which she is thoroughly ungrateful, is contrasted with Zdenka's desperate circumstance: she has to dress like a boy and is deeply in love with Matteo. Strauss's music doesn't help in either of these cases: the climax of the scene with Zdenka is an insipid scoring of a Croatian folk melody, and the scene with Elemer does little or nothing with the portentous words and phrases contained there. Giving him the benefit of the doubt, it could be argued that the 'Der Richtige' duet with Zdenka represents their naively idealistic imagining of the purity of true love, something that will be disturbed during the opera; and, more importantly, Strauss is reserving the deeper emotions for the Act I finale. In any case, Hofmannsthal had carefully chosen these attributes to serve Arabella's symbolic function.

One of the most important recurring symbols in Hofmannsthal's oeuvre is that of 'outer' ['außen' or 'draußen'] as opposed to 'inner' ['innen']. Throughout the whole act, the image of Arabella's going out is foremost. In the scene with Zdenka, she keeps looking out of the window at the outside world with all its possibilities. In the final solo scene she is preparing to go out, in the present moment with Elemer, but she is also mentally preparing herself to go out to the ball that evening. These literal examples of 'going out' stand for the process of individuation: in order for the Self to come into existence it is necessary for it to undertake a figurative 'going out' into the world. The Self sits at the centre of the whole universe, as Chandos realizes in his moments of clarity: 'I, in a state of continuous intoxication, conceived the whole of existence as one great unit … . […] thus it prevailed through the whole ex-

[37] Hofmannsthal to Strauss, 25 December 1927, *Correspondence*, 465.

panse of life in all directions; everywhere I was in the centre of it, never suspecting mere appearance'.[38] According to Hofmannsthal's metaphysics, the World, which can only be one of appearance, is contained within the individual, and the Self and World can only become separate by attempting to act in the world. Through action, the person experiences resistance to his will which then serves to define the boundaries of the Self: 'living, or living oneself out completely, [is possible] only in the struggle with opposing powers'.[39]

In his survey of the symbols of 'outer' and 'inner' in Hofmannsthal's output, J.H. Reid writes: 'all Hofmannsthal's heroes have to break out of their introverted state'.[40] In *Ariadne auf Naxos* (1912/16) however, going out of oneself means towards a Dionysian oneness with the universe – surely initially designed to parody the Wagnerian/early-Nietzschean stance of *The Birth of Tragedy*. Ariadne hides in her cave, ignoring the advances of the *commedia dell'arte troupe*, who evoke the satyr chorus of Greek theatre, only emerging to embrace Bacchus who transforms her into a constellation of stars. This is the wrong sort of entering into the world but, in the completed opera, is anything but parodistic in tone. In a step closer to what happens in *Arabella*, the Kaiserin in *Die Frau ohne Schatten* has her non-personhood symbolized by her lack of shadow; she is only able to gain selfhood by acting, or rather by deliberately *not* acting. It is her cry of 'Ich – will – nicht!', marking her refusal to drink from the fountain of life, which would deny the Dyer and his wife children, that enables her to join the world of life and gain a shadow. Arabella's 'cave' or 'lack of shadow' is her passivity, her peering out from behind the curtain and hoping that the world will come to her. As in the earlier operas, she only joins Life through action at the very end. This explains why there cannot be any genuine drama: in order that this final 'act' be preserved as the highlight and thereby figured as the key to the metaphysics being presented, she must exist until then in liminal state of non-being.

There is, however, something that lifts Arabella above the solipsistic moaning of Ariadne or the mendacious thievery of the Kaiserin, and that is her awareness of the inherent potentiality of her situation. When she does eventually 'go out' she does not feel constrained to do so within the parameters that have been set for her, but is prepared to look beyond the limits of her Viennese sphere. This is where the 'encounter', which Hofmannsthal explored in a short prose work of 1907, becomes important. The encounter offers the individual the opportunity for 'disintegration' and then a choice of the infinite possibilities available for 'reintegration':[41]

> It seems to me that it is not the embrace but the encounter that is the true, decisive erotic pantomime. At no moment is the sensual so close to the spiritual, the spiritual so sensual, as in the

[38] 'Mir erschien damals in einer Art von andauernder Trunkenheit das ganze Dasein al seine große Einheit … . […] [Und] so gings fort durch die ganze Breite des Lebens, rechter und linker Hand; überall war ich mitten drinnen wurde nie ein Scheinhaftes gewahr'.

[39] 'leben oder sich ausleben nur im Kampf mit den widerstrebenden Mächten.' (W29 42; A 127)

[40] J. H. Reid, ' "Draussen sind wir zu finden" – The Development of a Hofmannsthal Symbol', *German Life and Letters* 17(1) (Fall 1973), 43.

[41] 'Each new acquaintance causes a disintegration and a new integration'. Hofmannsthal, 'Book of Friends', 353.

> encounter. At this moment everything is possible, everything in flux, everything diffused. The yearning towards one another is still without lust – a naïve combination of intimacy and shyness.[42]

In her aria 'der Richtige', Arabella sings of how when she falls for a man she very soon inexplicably loses interest. But since she has not yet met the stranger who look at her 'with big, serious, steady eyes' she can still imagine that he will be the one who will provoke in her the change that neither Matteo nor any of the counts have managed. And for Hofmannsthal, it is people with Arabella's almost impossible mix of personality traits that are particularly susceptible to the power of the encounter.

> This obscure yet passionate desiring, this crying of the unknown for the unknown, is its true power. The encounter promises more than the embrace can keep. It seems, if I may say so, to belong to a higher order of things – to that law according to which the stars move and thoughts fertilize one another. For a very daring, very naïve imagination, however, wherein innocence and cynicism are inextricably entangled, the encounter is already the anticipation of embrace.[43]

Arabella admits that were her encounter to result in an actual meeting, it is more than likely that 'he would become like anyone else to her', the spell would be broken just as it was with the other suitors. But while it remains just an encounter, she can derive that exquisitely mournful pleasure in contemplating the cone of possibility emanating from a meeting that will never happen. It is this complex emotional state that Hofmannsthal distils into the final solo aria as 'the essentially pictorial, mimically convincing element' that Strauss asked for.[44]

MYTH

One of the best known definitions of the function of myth in so-called 'primitive societies' was given by Bronislaw Malinowski.

> Studied alive, myth […] is not symbolic, but a direct expression of its subject matter; it is not an explanation in satisfaction of a scientific interest, but a narrative resurrection of a primeval reality, told in satisfaction of deep religious wants, moral cravings, social submissions, assertions, even practical requirements. Myth fulfils in primitive culture an indispensable function: it expresses, enhances, and codifies belief; it safeguards and enforces practical rules for the guidance of man. Myth is thus a vital ingredient of human civilization; it is not an idle tale, but a hard-worked active force; it is not an intellectual explanation or an artistic imagery, but a pragmatic charter of primitive faith and moral wisdom.[45]

Although this was written nearly twenty years after Hofmannsthal's was working on *Arabella*, it still captures the approach to myth that he was working with. It sets up a dichotomy between the primitive and the modern. For the primitive, myth is a not a system of thought through which the world can ex-

[42] Hofmannsthal, 'Encounters' (1907), *Selected Prose*, trans. Mary Hottinger, Tania & James Stern (New York: Pantheon, 1952), 208-9.
[43] Hofmannsthal, 'Encounters', 209.
[44] Strauss to Hofmannsthal, 24 June 1928, *Correspondence*, 481.
[45] Bronislaw Malinowski, *Magic, Science and Religion, and Other Essays* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday Anchor, 1948), 101.

plained, it simply presents the world the way it is. The modern, on the other hand, is able to distinguish between those of his beliefs that are scientifically demonstrable and those that stem from religion, or other types of superstition, which are then called 'myth'. 'Myth' in the sense Hofmannsthal would have understood it is, therefore, a concept only available to moderns. This causes two interrelated problems: firstly, unlike myth, which sets out an originary basis for morality, science offers no criteria for making judgements; secondly, despite the fact myth has no scientific claim to truth, it seems to be indispensable for life. Nietzsche identifies this problem in *Beyond Good and Evil*:

> The falseness of a judgment is for us not necessarily an objection to a judgment; in this respect our new language may sound strangest. The question is to what extent it is life-promoting, life-preserving, species-preserving, perhaps even species-cultivating. […] To recognize untruth as a condition of life – that certainly means resisting accustomed value feelings in a dangerous way; and a philosophy that risks this would by that token alone place itself beyond good and evil.[46]

He was talking here specifically about morality, but the argument can easily be extended to the broader category of aesthetics, and also to myth. Hofmannsthal was not concerned about the truth or untruth of his mythopoeic creations in some non-existent 'reality', his task was to shape extant cultural memory into something 'life-promoting'.

The *Spielwelt* of *Arabella* turns on the dialectic between the setting and the alien character introduced into it – the decadent city of Vienna, dancing gaily towards financial and, later, political, ruin; and the Slav Mandryka, representing the wholesome countryside life and unequipped to deal with the city's modern ways. That is, between two equally fictive mythologies, one life-affirming the other life-denying. Hofmannsthal was continuing the reconstructive project he began during the First World War, designed to give meaning to the Austrian suffering and loss of life. In 'Ad me ipsum' he wrote:

> Myths do not develop without the actions and suffering of individuals: therefore the events since 1914 were necessary so that the Forces [unleashed by the war] could turn themselves into myth.[47]

Myths cannot be invented by artists, but they do have the ability to channel what is already available in the culture. The particular myth he tapped into in *Arabella*, and which he believed was beneficial both to Austria and to Europe, was that of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Austria was uniquely able, through its shared cultural memory, to act as a lynchpin in Europe, tying Slav and Germanic countries together in supra-national harmony. This was not just borne of nostalgia, but was also demonstrably in Austria's national interest, as he made clear in an open letter of 1915:

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[46] Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, *Basic Writings of Nietzsche* (2000), 201-2. (*BGE,* 4)

[47] 'Ohne Taten und Leiden der Individuen entsteht kein Mythos: daher bedurfte es der Vorgänge seit 1914, damit die Mächte sich zum Mythos gestalten.' Hofmannsthal, 'Ad me ipsum', *Die neue Rundschau*, 372.

> For even if other uniformly national states [England and France] believe that they are entitled to reject the concept of a united Europe and stand alone in hardened self-sufficiency, this is out of the question for my country … Austria needs Europe more than any other country does, for what is Austria but Europe on a smaller scale? For us, therefore, even more than for the others, this war also has a spiritual significance, …[48]

In a later letter he continued in a similar vein: although he accepted that the 'thousand-year Holy Roman Empire' was built on 'self-assertion' and 'power', there was also a 'sacred' ideal lying above these worldly concerns that needed to be preserved in memory, because in it lay Austria's salvation.[49] Thus, although Hofmannsthal was hostile towards the Czechs and other Slavs at the outbreak of war, sharing with other Viennese a knee-jerk pan-German sentiment, he became increasingly certain of the strength that the Slavs brought to the Empire as he came to consider a post-war role for Austria. Towards the end of the war, various Slav nationalists, including the Czechs, started to fight for independence, and so Hofmannsthal was beginning to embrace them and the idea of the Empire at the very moment it was falling apart.

On casual acquaintance with *Arabella*, one could be forgiven for assuming that Mandryka was that stock character 'the comic foreigner', who in Austrian theatre was traditionally a Slav – Prince Orlofsky in *Die Fledermaus*, for example. However, as J.B. Bednall observes, in the post-war stage works,

> [the] Slavs themselves might still be presented in the traditional comic light or as part of the Austrian background. But such appearances never lack an overtone of irony, nor do they contradict the presence of a new appreciation or a more serious intent. *Der Schwierige*, conceived and started before the end of the war, marks the beginning of the new approach. *Der Unbestechliche* and *Arabella* show its culmination.[50]

In *Der Schwierige* Hofmannsthal was primarily concerned with providing sketches of modern German character types – the silly bluestocking, the fame-obsessed academic, the Prussian for whom nothing will stand in the way of his will – and contrasting them with the already mythical pre-war Austrian aristocrat who appears to fit in with others, not ever allowing his own intentions to become apparent. The Slavs are mentioned only as fighting comrades on the Carpathian front, but Hofmannsthal did emphasize the fact that they were prepared to engage fellow Slavs in defence of the Empire. Like *Arabella*, *Der Unbestechliche* has a Slav as a main character, a butler, Theodor, brought as a foil to an Austrian society 'already gravely weakened by moral leukaemia'.[51] Despite the comic mileage wrought from

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[48] Hofmannsthal, 'Antwort auf die Umfrage "Svenska Dagbladet" ' [1915] (Übersetzt von Friedrich Stieve), *Aufzeichnungen*, 363. Only a fragment of the original exists, the German here is a translation of a version published in Swedish in a Swedish newspaper.

[49] 'Dies, dies ist jetzt die Agonie, die eigentliche Agonie des tausendjährigen heiligen römischen Reiches deutscher Nation […] es war ein *heiliges* Reich, die einzige Institution, die auf Höreres als auf Macht u. Bestand und Selbstbehauptung gestellt war'. Hofmannstahl to Bodenhausen, 10 July 1917*, Briefe der Freundschaft* (Düsseldorf E. Diederichs, 1953), 235-236.

[50] J. B. Bednall, 'The Slav Symbol in Hofmannsthal's Post-War Comedies', *German Life and Letters* 14(1-2) (1961), 36.

[51] Bednall, 'The Slav Symbol', 38.

Theodor's mangled diction, his main function is as a symbol of volkish innocence, brought in to act as a guilty conscience for the young Baron. Disapproving of the Baron's infidelity and mistreatment of his wife, Theodor concocts an elaborate ruse that effects a refreshing variation on the standard romantic comedy ending: the Baron falls in love with the woman he is already married to.

This idea of the Slav as offering potential salvation to the morally corrupt Viennese was carried to its logical conclusion in *Arabella*, where Mandryka is of equal or greater social status than any of the Viennese, and it is he who gets the girl. In order to achieve this Hofmannsthal has conflated two ideals: that of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, with its connotations of strength through diversity; and that of the *Volk*. The still relatively large mass of peasants, around one third of the population of Austria at the time, were seen by the Conservative Revolutionaries as part of any remedy for society's ills, unaffected as they were by the mistakes of the nineteenth century or any of the intellectual problems posed by modernity. Unlike his predecessors, Mandryka is no longer simply a comic role: he retains the Slav-German idiom from his army days, but his delivery is more nuanced than Theodor's and Hofmannsthal 'provides him with constructions and figures of speech which blend convincingly with his Slav imagery'.[52] And it is this imagery, of the autochthonous Slav with the 'aura of tall, silent forests, of deep, spontaneous emotion, of self-sufficiency and an uncorrupted natural order', through which Hofmannsthal is able to sell the *völkisch* ideal to his audience.[53]

It is important to realize that Hofmannsthal's Conservative Revolution was seen in terms of centuries and he was under no illusion that there was any possibility of an immediate retreat from modernity.[54] Instead, staging the mythical ideal of *Bodenständigkeit* – the sense of identity with folk, soil and immediate homeland, unchanging values, and oneness with ancestors and past – through the Slav symbol has the more modest aim of drawing out qualities that are already latent in the modern audience. What we have in *Arabella*, then, is the mirror image of what Edward Said sees occurring in much nineteenth century literature, where the orient is concocted as a mysterious other through which the darker regions of the European psyche might be explored.[55] Hofmannsthal's *positively marked*, but equally fictive, other – knitted together from a nostalgia for empire, a Romantic deification of nature and a city-dweller's ignorance of the realities of feudal life – would, he believed, resonate sufficiently with audiences to encourage them to shake off their spiritual torpor. For this to work the portrait of Vienna he painted had to be allegorically recognizable as the contemporary city and, for all their faults, the characters could not ever seem beyond redemption.

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[52] Bednall, 'The Slav Symbol', 42.
[53] Williams, *The Broken Eagle*, 25.
[54] Williams, for example, shows how Hofmannsthal's political creed easily descends into reaction or fascism, by comparing him with T.S. Eliot who in his less careful moments ended up saying some particularly regrettable things, even though he was also a 'Conservative Revolutionary'. Ibid., 14-15
[55] Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin, 2003). See in particular the account of the work *Salammbô* and Flaubert's letters home from Carthage when researching the work, pp 166-97.

Hofmannsthal ensured that this was the case by making all the characters other than Arabella and Mandryka, and to a lesser extent Zdenka, caricatures, each exhibiting one amusing trait. Hofmannsthal described the three Counts as in 'frivolous pursuit of all skirts' and Waldner as 'that cashiered cavalry captain and his whole shady milieu' and how 'these figures are tainted by vulgarity, tangled up with a rather vulgar and dubious Vienna'.[56] But the characters are not simply 'vulgar', their foibles have been chosen carefully: each is the victim of a crippling self-delusion. The Countess puts her faith in the prognostications of a fortune teller, the Count believes the answer to his financial problems lies at the gaming table, the three young counts move through life uncomprehendingly and unthinkingly, and Matteo, who is too weak to accept the obvious reality that Arabella has no interest in him whatever. The biggest self-defeating fantasy that runs through the opera, however, is that monetary wealth alone is necessary for deliverance Waldner's gambling is shorthand for stock market speculation, and the alacrity with which he is happy to accept Mandryka's money shows the morally bankrupt ethos of money for nothing prevalent during boom times. Hofmannsthal's warning came way too late: the stock market crash of 1929, paralleling the crash of 1873 that he is alluding to in the opera, occurred three months after his death, and over three years before the work's first performance. With his healthy myth-making, which sets up a system for judging action relevant to his audience, Hofmannsthal is also able to warn of the dangers of unhealthy mythologies. False gods like money, pseudo-religion, and indiscriminately chasing women are life-denying because they are escapist fantasies that distract from the genuine satisfaction that can be found in facing up to and overcoming one's difficulties.

RITUAL

Hofmannsthal's antipathy towards the Comtean revolution in the social sciences, in which all knowledge had to be purged of anything metaphysical or mysterious, was not without rational foundation.[57] In her book *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice*, Catherine Bell shows how Hofmannsthal's anthropologist contemporaries, like Durkheim, van Gennep and Otto, who were involved in the positivization of theology, and their twentieth-century intellectual descendants, have found it difficult to escape from the thought-action dichotomy through which 'ritual' is defined.[58] In order to theorize ritual, the anthropologist separates its psychological component, which are called 'beliefs', from the bodily action, which is then termed 'ritual'. This then sets up a chain of dichotomies: the first of which is the distinction between the scientist's analytical thought and the subject's symbolic thought, and since the former allows the scientist to 'understand' the latter, it privileges that type of thinking. This then leads to the further separation of nature and supernature, or of sacred and profane, which might be viewed insiders as continua.

[56] Hofmannsthal to Strauss, 13 July 1928, *Correspondence*, 486.
[57] William R. Everdell, 'Chapter 2: The Century Ends in Vienna', *The First Moderns* (Chicago & London: Chicago UP, 1997), 13-29.
[58] Catherine Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1992).

The ritual process has typically been seen by the anthropologist as a process in which thought and action are dialectically synthesized. Ritual thereby reverses what only ever was a theoretical distinction in the first place, imposed from the outside and having nothing to do with the way it is seen by the participants. However, with the ubiquity of the scientific way of thinking in intellectual discourse, it is impossible not to split religious practice, or art in its role as a humanist replacement for religion, into the evidentially effective and ineffective, or propositionally true and untrue. This situation can only cause misery to the intellectual who has deep spiritual experiences, sees in them the potential for salvation, and yet recognizes their complete irrelevance to modern society.

One of the consequences of evoking a believable, although deliberately artificial, *Spielwelt* from the microcosm of 1860s Viennese society on *Faschingsdienstag* is that the carnivalesque descent into the profane opens up the need for the balancing counterweight of the sacred. And indeed, the carnal pleasures of dancing, drinking and sexual misconduct that saturate the second act do find their spiritual complement in an adaptation of the Catholic absolution rite traditionally performed before Lent in the third. Almost certainly contrary to Hofmannsthal's intentions, Strauss continues the debauchery by painting a vivid portrait of Zdenka and Matteo's assignation as a prelude to the act.[59] The confusion and disorder is continued by Hofmannsthal too: first Matteo is surprised to see Arabella fully dressed downstairs so shortly after they had been together upstairs in the bedroom; and then when Mandryka, the Waldners and various other hangers-on return from the ball to try and sort out Mandryka's allegations that Matteo is Arabella's secret lover. As Strauss points out everyone is guilty, except Arabella, the only one everyone thinks is guilty.[60] Mandryka even offers to forgive Arabella if only she will confess her wrongdoings. After much bluster on all sides, but particularly from Mandryka, Zdenka confesses her actions and, demonstrating her contrition, is forgiven, most fully by Arabella, whom she has most wronged. This shifts the guilt onto Mandryka, who has publicly slandered Arabella and now whose turn it is to feel remorse. The guests leave the hall and Arabella goes to bed intending to leave Mandryka in this tortured state, asking him to have his servant bring her a glass of water as she does. The way is then open for the famous final staircase scene.

In the Slav betrothal rite, the glass of water has a number of associations. It represents the virginal purity of the bride-to-be, as Arabella acknowledges when she hands over the glass with the words: 'and so I present this untouched drink to my friend'. Through its New Testament association with the eternal 'water of life' it also represents fidelity, which is reinforced by Mandryka smashing the glass against the steps so that 'no one will ever drink out of this glass after me'. Water is often thought

[59] Hofmannsthal told Strauss that he hated 'music with the curtain down' and there is no mention of the prelude in the libretto. As in the similarly sexually explicit Act I prelude to *Rosenkavalier*, everything is implied by Matteo's appearance on the landing when the curtain rises. See Hofmannsthal to Strauss, 22 December 1927, *Correspondence*, trans. Hanns Hammelmann and Ewald Osers (London: Collins, 1961), 462; and the libretto, Hugo von Hofmannsthal, *Sämtliche Werke*, Vol. 26: Operndichtungen, ed. Rudolf Hirsch, Hans-Albrecht Koch, et al (Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer, 1976), 53. (Hereafter this edition of Hofmannsthal's works is referred to as *W*26, where the number is the particular volume being cited.)
[60] Strauss to Hofmannsthal, 23 July 1928, *Correspondence*, 492.

of as a source of life and when it occurs with the feminine can be a symbol of fertility – a desirable trait in a young wife. Here it also stands for the cycle of life and death: the death of the girl Arabella and her rebirth into womanhood.

Its main purpose, however, is to resonate with the Slav symbol Mandryka as a sign of spiritual purity. Hofmannsthal made this clear in a letter to Strauss in which he flatters him for having understood that Mandryka is the 'key' to the whole work.

> For Mandryka, above all this pleasure-seeking, frivolous Vienna, where everybody lives on tick, is the foil; he is steeped in his world of unspoilt villages, his oak forests untouched by axe, his ancient folk-songs. With him the wide open spaces of the vast half-Slav Austria enter Viennese comedy and carry into it a breath of fresh totally different air … [61]

However, it is possible to overstate the case for the centrality of Mandryka in the opera, as J.B. Bednall does.

> The Slav symbol with which Hofmannsthal has been experimenting in these last comedies now reveals itself as a variant of a constant type. It stands for purity: whatever, through freshness or innocence or simple strength leads back to ontological truth, to the 'Weltgeheimnis'. Thus the naïve autochthonous goodness in Mandryka can attract whatever is still integrated and unflawed in the child of an exquisite but dying culture, Arabella, but only at the cost of removing her from her world and making her like itself.[62]

From this one-sided view, Mandryka appears as a 'redeemer' to rescue Arabella from the clutches of a depraved city. This masculinization of the opera – similar, incidentally, to the attempts Abbate has uncovered operating in the critical discourse on *Elektra* – fails to grasp the political message that Hofmannsthal is trying to convey. In a note referring to *Ariadne* in 'Ad me ipsum' Hofmannsthal writes:

> The fateful bridegroom: Bacchus. Crossing of mythical motifs. The mutual transformation. The allomatic element.[63]

The same process occurs at the end of *Arabella* as at the end of *Ariadne*. Firstly there is a crossing of 'mythical motifs', although the myths are now those of the more recent Viennese and Slav traditions. As I discussed above, Arabella's descent of the staircase is not witnessed just from Mandryka's point of view, but simultaneously from both points of view through the allomatic element. The enactment of the betrothal rite continues this joint interaction which produces not just Arabella's salvation, but a 'mutual transformation' as in *Ariadne*.

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[61] 'Vor allem aber ist dieses vergnügungssüchtige, frivole, schuldenmachende Wien die Folie für Mandryka – ihn umgibt die Reinheit seiner Dörfer, seiner nie von der Axt berührten Eichenwalder, seiner alten Volkslieder, her tritt die Weite des grossen halbslawischen Österreich herein in eine Wienerische Komödie und lasst eine ganz andere Luft einstromen ...'. {Reference for German} Hofmannsthal to Strauss, 13 July 28, *Correspondence*, 486-7.

[62] J. B. Bednall, 'The Slav Symbol in Hofmannsthal's Post-War Comedies', *German Life and Letters* 14(1-2) (1961), 42.

[63] 'Der schicksalvolle Bräutigam: Bacchus. Kreuzung mythischer Motive. Die gegenseitige Verwandlung. Das allomatische Element.': Hofmannsthal, *W*24, 226; *GW*, Aufzeichnungen, 218.

Before handing over the glass to Mandryka, Arabella sings of a 'power … from above' ['Macht … von oben'], referring to the transformative, purifying power of Mandryka's love.

> But after, when I felt you here standing in the dark,
> A great power from above touched my heart,
> So that I no longer had to refresh myself with a drink,
> No, a feeling of happiness had already refreshed me […] .
>
> (Dann aber, wie ich Sie gespürt hab' hier im Finstern stehn,
> hat eine grosse Macht mich angerührt von oben bi sans Herz,
> dass ich mich nicht erfrischen musi mit einem Trunk:
> nein, mich erfrischt schon das Gefühl von meinen Glück, […] .)

In giving him the water that she wanted for herself, she is making a sacrifice for Mandryka. In the Catholic tradition, Lent is a period of self-denial and abstinence which the believer undergoes in order to purify himself before the festival of Easter, when Jesus's sacrifice is celebrated. At the start of this process, on Ash Wednesday, the penitent must confess and ask for forgiveness from a priest. In this scene, which almost certainly takes place in the early hours of Ash Wednesday, Arabella is acting like a priest and, instead of painting the sacramental cross of ashes on his forehead, gives Mandryka the glass of water as a symbol of absolution. The ritual of absolution is transformational because the sin removed in the processes is existential, its presence altering one's essential state of being. The secularity of the ritual, however, is never in doubt: Hofmannsthal only uses the verb 'verzeihen', never 'vergeben', which is used in religious expressions such as 'vergeben der Sünden' ('the remission of sins'). The transformation is therefore mutual, which is fundamental to Hofmannsthal's conception: Mandryka is a welcome 'breath of fresh totally different air' come to blow the filth of corruption away from the city, but Vienna has something to give in return, its unique ability to form bonds with and draw strength from foreign cultures. Arabella accomplishes the mutual transformation by appropriating an alien ritual from her suitor and combining it with her own indigenous practice.

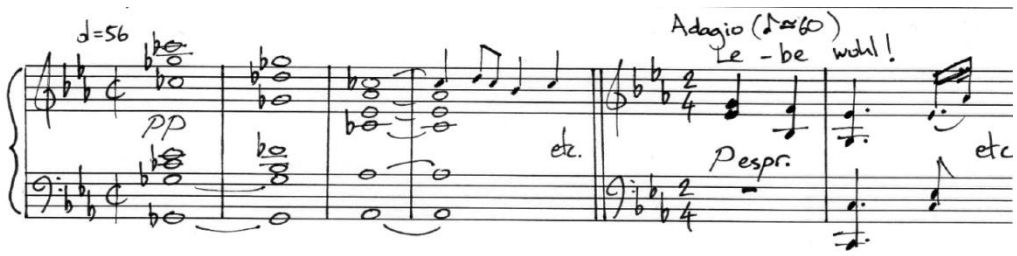
* * *

In Hofmannsthal's this-world metaphysics which divides the world up, not into phenomena and noumena – as in the Kantian tradition – but into the inner and outer experience that defines human consciousness. This is an acceptance that Nietzsche's last phase of metaphysics – that the distinction between real and appearance has broken down – has indeed come about. But if cultural unity can only be achieved in language – word, interconnected symbols, fictive but shared mythology, and physical rituals in the real world through which they are affirmed – what purpose does music serve. Is it just a garnish on top of something that is – in its art-religious intent – already complete? Or, accepting that Strauss has also achieved his aim of a non-metaphysical music that represents only this-worldly things (which includes internal psychological states), might it be reinforcing the same 'outer Dionysian' aesthetic? In the next chapter I will problematize the idea of a one-world, or secular aesthetics through the idea of

're-sacralization'. It turns out that it is no simple matter to erase the distinction between sacred and profane in art.

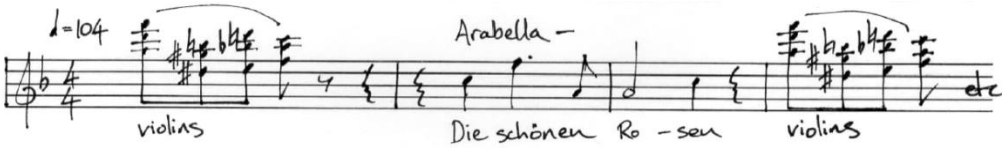
The Lies We Tell Ourselves

When Arabella appears at the top of the stairs in the final scene of the opera, ready to forgive her fiancé for doubting her honour, Strauss used a motif that references the opening of Beethoven's *Lebewohl* Piano Sonata, Op. 81a, (1811):



Ex. 7.1 Staircase motif (Act III: 138/1-4); *Lebewohl* motif

Her sudden decision to accept Mandryka, despite his flaws, and not storm off to her bedroom as she had planned, stems from her realization that *Der Richtige* – Mr Right – need not be perfect after all. The allusion thus marks the moment she says 'goodbye' to her girlhood and becomes a woman. Strauss's wish to communicate with his audience through the shared musical tradition, is not confined to the more serious passages. Earlier, in the middle of Act I, Arabella is excited to see that a bouquet of red roses has arrived for her; and then disappointed to hear that they are from Matteo, a former lover she has lost interest in. The following familiar figure is heard in the violins throughout the discussion with her sister Zdenka:



Ex. 7.2 (Act III: 39/2-5)

It is, of course, the rose motif from *Der Rosenkavalier* (1911). Strauss was well aware that *Arabella* was going to be compared with his and Hofmannsthal's other Viennese comedy of manners and this amounts to a musical nod and a wink to knowledgeable peers. Hofmannsthal too cashed in on a presumed familiarity with the now largely stable operatic repertoire. The opera opens with Arabella's mother consulting her fortune-teller about what the future holds for a future on the brink of bankruptcy. Replace the tarot cards with the rope of Destiny, and the fortune-teller's opaque but accurate predictions for the action of the opera look like Erda's in *Götterdämmerung* (1876). At the other extreme of the operatic spectrum, the second act with its *Fiakerball* (cabbie's ball) backdrop, isn't shy about its indebtedness to the second act of *Die Fledermaus* (1874).

It is to be expected in a mature tradition such as opera in the 1920s and 30s that librettists and composers would make knowing or ironic references to the established canon.[1] The purpose here, however, is not to determine the function of quotations or near-quotations, nor to trace the influence of specific works on *Arabella*. Rather, it is to determine how Strauss reworks elements of the tradition in order to create a new economy of the sacred. Much has been written about the influence of Schopenhauer's metaphysics on Wagner, and recently Charles Youmans has shown how Nietzsche's purportedly anti-metaphysical philosophy was a key influence on Strauss – if not actually responsible for Strauss's musical realism (the inadequacy of this term will be addressed in what follows) then at least providing him with intellectual justification.[2] The problem is that Wagner and Strauss were both materialists and so neither had any truck with a metaphysical reality external to the physical stuff of nature. Nevertheless, Wagner thought – following Feuerbach – that the human animal automatically invests aspects of its conscious world with the power of the transcendent, even if the discoveries of science mean that intellectually it knows them to possess no such thing. Assuming this insight of Feuerbach's to be correct, I argue that Strauss's Wagner-indebted music in *Arabella* does not represent a de-transcendentalization but rather a re-transcendentalization.[3] It still figures some aspects of the immanent reality as sacred and others as profane, it is just that the dichotomy is relocated and less obvious.[4]

TRADITION AND TRANSCENDENCE

It is rare to find a book about Wagner – certainly one written in the past decade or so – that doesn't begin by acknowledging the controversial nature of the subject matter. Strauss, on the other hand, has

[1] Strauss did not confine himself to the German tradition either: see Reinhold Schötterer, 'Ironic Allusions to Italian Opera in the Musical Comedies of Richard Strauss', *Richard Strauss: New Perspectives on the Composer and His Work*, ed. Bryan Gilliam (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1992), 77-91.

[2] See in particular: Charles Youmans, *Richard Strauss's Orchestral Music and the German Intellectual Tradition: The Philosophical Roots of Musical Modernism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005).

[3] The question of whether this re-transcendentalisation is merely a reflection of a new cultural configuration or whether Strauss and Hofmannsthal were actively trying to encourage their audience to see the world in a new way is a delicate one, that will only be answered partially in this chapter and taken up again in the next.

[4] Nietzsche's great struggle in *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft* (1882) and elsewhere was to the attempt reconcile the opportunity for humanity to break away from superstition offered by materialist science with the necessity for spiritual (or artistic) sustenance.

enjoyed an almost complete reversal of fortunes since 1990 when Michael Tanner was able to write without embarrassment that the 'genius manifest in *Salome* consists in coating a huge pile of shit with a thin layer of marzipan and icing-sugar'.[5] Strauss's long-standing reputation as a pedlar of kitsch ought to be seen for what it was, faux-aristocratic snobbery at middle-brow taste. (Although as I shall show in this chapter and the next, *Arabella* is the very opposite of Tanner's criticism of *Salome*: a sparkly veneer masking something of surprising sophistication and depth.) Yes, his music abounds in the hyperbolic repetition of cliché, it privileges orchestral effects over motivic development, it follows the curve of the extra-musical material rather than musical logic, and all the other criticisms levelled by Adorno.[6] But art designed to reach out to the non-intellectual middle can also be sophisticated and worthy of critical attention, which is why the attempt to rehabilitate him by recasting him as a postmodernist was strained at best.[7] While Strauss could certainly compose with his tongue in his cheek – as *Rosenkavalier* and *Ariadne auf Naxos* (1916/19) amply demonstrate – the climactic moments of any of the Hofmannsthal collaborations hardly exhibit the irony necessary to bring about the transgressive rupture between high and low sought after by deconstructive criticism. Indeed, they avoid either the asceticism of high art or the emerging anti-bourgeois 'cool' of low art altogether, let alone disturb any boundary between them. The problem with the anaemic, and (apparently) value-free system that has replaced deconstruction, the rhizomic plurality of equal 'modernisms', is that it ignores the political dimension altogether.[8] More worthwhile, would be an approach that acknowledges the sophistication of middle art like *Arabella* while retaining something of the political insight of the old Marxian viewpoint. That would help to bring some of the healthy ambivalence that tortures Wagner scholars into Strauss studies.

One way of doing this would be to propose a different way of looking at the secularism Hofmannsthal was exhibiting in *Arabella*. If spirituality was now a purely personal matter that could no longer be spoken of in the public realm – as was the message of the Chandos Letter – then then social interaction must take place on the basis of mutually agreed norms and conventions rather than a shared metaphysical belief.[9] However, many thinkers, taking their lead from Carl Schmitt's essay *Political Theology* (*Politische Theologie*, 1922), have been forced – by the spectacular inauguration in 2001

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[5] Michael Tanner, 'A Master Cosmetician' [Review of the Cambridge Opera Handbooks on *Arabella*, *Salome* and *Elektra*], *Times Literary Supplement* (June 15-20, 1990), 642. The review sparked some angry exchanges in the letters pages over the following weeks.

[6] Theodor W. Adorno, 'Richard Strauss: Zum hundersten Geburtstag: 11. Juni 1964', *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 16, ed. Rolf Tiedemann (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1978), 565-606; English translation, 'Richard Strauss: Born June 11, 1964', trans. Samuel and Shierry Weber, *Perspectives of New Music* 4(1) (1965), 14-32 and 4(2), 113-29. Richard Wattenbarger has made a good attempt to neutralize much of this critique: 'A "Very German Process": The Contexts of Adorno's Strauss Critique', *19th-Century Music* 25(2-3), (2002), 313-336

[7] Leon Botstein, 'The Enigmas of Richard Strauss: A Revisionist View', *Richard Strauss and His World*, ed. Bryan Gilliam (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 3-32. Michael Walter, *Richard Strauss und Seine Zeit* (Laaber: Laaber, 2000), in particular the chapter 'Postmoderne und Ironie', 257-79.

[8] Walter Frisch uses this model as a structuring device in *German Modernism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).

[9] This is considered in more detail in Chapter 6.

of what has come to be known as the 'post-secular age' – to re-evaluate the concept of secularization.[10] In *The Faith of the Faithless*, Simon Critchley synthesizes a number of these to make a convincing argument that the process of apparent secularization flowing from the Enlightenment was actually one of 're-sacralisation'.[11] Hofmannsthal's attempt to relegate metaphysical depth to something his characters could be seen to experience but played no part in their rationale for action would be, according to this analysis, less a way of keeping spirituality safely hidden than of sacralising the law itself.[12] Hofmannsthal's insistence that, in the absence of a universally recognized symbol (like the cross) in a modern pluralist society, this was the only solution is equivalent to the 'deism' of modern liberal politics: the request that the individual place complete faith in the rational process of the law itself.[13]

It is possible to situate Wagner's operas – or at least the vision expounded in the Zurich essays – within this mode of thought too.[14] In his close reading of Rousseau's *Social Contract* (1762), Critchley homes in on the paradox that the collective will of the people cannot be exercised unless it is imposed from some unimpeachable position outside the political body itself. He argues that the civil religion that Rousseau introduced in the last chapter was not just some last-minute addendum, but crucial to the whole project of state formation: without a transcendent guarantor, the law has no authority.[15] (It is for this same reason that Hegel required a quasi-divine constitutional monarch to guarantee absolute freedom in his ideal polity.) One of the misconceptions about Wagner's operas – and of *Der Ring des Nibelungen* (written 1848-74) in particular – is that he was providing the basis of just such a civil religion in the form of a German nationalist mythology.[16] Wagner's Zurich essays, influenced by Feuerbach's materialist theory of religion, represent a complex, and often contradictory, confrontation with the question of how art might reflect a commitment to genuine politics. The key insight of Feuerbach's *Das Wesen des Christentums* (1841), was that the human was a metaphysical animal who could not help but project his better instincts onto a fictional deity. Recognizing that transcendence was fictional,

[10] These ideas occur repeatedly in the work of Giorgo Agamben, Alain Badiou, Slavoj Žižek and Charles Taylor, amongst others.
[11] Simon Critchley, *The Faith of the Faithless: Experiments in Political Theology* (London: Verso, 2012).
[12] This attitude is summed up in Hofmannsthal's well known phrase: 'Depth must be hidden. Where? On the surface'.: Hofmannsthal, 'From "The Book of Friends" ', *Selected Prose*, trans. Mary Hottinger, Tania & James Stern (New York: Pantheon, 1952), 362.
[13] In the notes for the speeches Hofmannsthal made on a tour of Scandinavia during the war he wrote: 'If the law is drawn into the individual, and the individual into the law, then in truth the rule of causality is conquered and a new form of binding supplants the social contract, for there is no contrast between the individual and the whole.': Hugo von Hofmannsthal, *Gesammelte Werke in Einzelausgaben*, Prosa III, ed. Herbert Steiner (Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer Verlag, 1964), 365. Translation in Benjamin Bennett, *Hugo Hofmannsthal: The Theatres of Consciousness* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 290.
[14] Wagner's attitude to neither metaphysics nor politics remained fixed over the course of his mature works (even these essays are full of inconsistencies and contradictions); what I sketch out here and below is a necessary simplification designed to help understand the music of *Arabella*.
[15] Critchley, 'Chapter 2: The Catechism of the Citizen', *Faith of the Faithless*, 21-102.
[16] In an article unrivalled in its perspicacity and insight, Mark Berry gives a genealogy this misreading in the early and mid twentieth century, before uncovering the original revolutionary intent: 'Richard Wagner and the Politics of Music-Drama', *The Historical Journal* 47(3) (Sep., 2004), 663-683.

meant that the Christian story of fall and redemption could be harnessed toward revolutionary ends.[17] The fictive transcendent need not be the deistic law-sanctioning God of liberal democracy, but could become a projection of the dynamic force of the will of the people. The redemptive climaxes of the operas – even in the pre-1848 operas, like *Tannhäuser*, where the seed of this idea had already taken root – represent the potential for future revolutionary change in which Rousseau's social utopia (or the Hegelian version) might be brought nearer. The 'art of the future' or the 'music drama' follows the same logic of the permanently out-of-reach goal: Wagner wrote operas, not music dramas; a music drama was only possible in in the uncorrupted time to come.

The controversy surrounding Wagner's work is usually attributed to his personal anti-Semitism, but this is only the most visible symptom of a deeper problem. Utopian schemes have historically tended to generate an 'anti-Christ', a group of people who constitute a barrier or a threat to heaven on earth, who can therefore be legitimately exterminated as inimical to the will of the people.[18] If all the references to Jewishness in Wagner's writing could somehow be expunged, the same dark obverse of utopianism would still remain. Hofmannsthal's deism can be thought of as an attempt to remove the necessity of an anti-Christ. His metaphysics involved reaffixing Feuerbach's inevitable transcendent projection onto the internal experience of the world, which made utopian living the responsibility of the individual. Strauss's original wish to call the *Alpine Symphony*, op. 64 (*Alpensinfonie*, 1915) 'Der Antichrist' might appear to be confusing in this context, but it actually starts to explain how the two artists can be considered to have been broadly in agreement here. 'Antichrist' in German can also mean something closer to 'anti-Christian', and represented for Strauss an anti-metaphysical stance that was equally against Christ and anti-Christ (or 'beyond good and evil' in familiar Nietzschean language). That this also lead to the sort of individualism Hofmannsthal envisioned can be seen by Strauss's assertion that the Nietzschean title embodied 'the ritual of cleansing through one's own powers' and 'freedom through work'.[19]

Nevertheless, I want to suggest that what they have done is no less metaphysical and consequently no less problematical than Wagner's operas. Wagner used a number of advanced harmonic and rhythmic techniques to mark certain supra-human forces (or a metaphorical representations thereof) as possessing a transcendental aura. By contrast, the music of *Arabella* 'transcendentalises the immanent', to borrow one of Critchley's phrases, by using moderated versions of the same techniques to confer the same sacred status onto aspects of material and psychological reality.

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[17] This is also the point of Critchley's book: there is no question of a return to a belief in a supernatural, agentive being, but a resilient faith in a useful fiction (while remaining aware of its fictitiousness) does seem to offer the best hope for achieving a genuine politics.

[18] Critchley, *Faith of the Faithless*, 112. The anti-Christ need not be defined by race or religion: those being systematically singled out for persecution at the moment in the West are the labouring poor whose labour is no longer required.

[19] But how did his project to cleanse music of its metaphysical baggage square with his claim that the symphony also represented the 'worship of eternal, glorious nature'? – this is a question I will come back to in the following chapter.

RETURN TO THE VENUSBERG

The prelude to the third act of *Arabella*, which recalls the opening minute or so of *Der Rosenkavalier* (and a similar passage in the earlier *Sinfonia Domestica* (1903)), is an explicit orchestral depiction of the erotic encounter between Matteo and Zdenka. I demonstrate that it is modelled on the bacchanal from Wagner's *Tannhäuser*, but that the effect of Strauss's rewrite is to domesticate Wagner's exoticism; turning the forbidden fruit of the Venusberg into a healthy, natural part of an ordinary romantic relationship.

There is no mention of the prelude in any of the correspondence, and it seems likely that Strauss decided on the addition unilaterally.[20] Firstly, Hofmannsthal made it clear to Strauss that the 'unsophisticated theatre audience' needed 'to see something happening on the stage all the time, as in every good opera', and further that '[all] that music-making with the curtain down is hateful to me …'.[21] Secondly, Hofmannsthal had complained that the additions Strauss had forced on him for *Rosenkavalier* had bloated the opera. The prelude adds nothing to the plot: what it portrays can be surmised immediately from the action that begins Act III proper. Nevertheless, it still makes perfect sense following the riotous cocktail of alcohol and lechery that ends Act II – which many think ends rather too abruptly.

After Arabella and Mandryka have been introduced, committed to marry each another, and Arabella has dismissed her three nice-but-dim suitors, the remainder of the second act is dedicated to setting up the crisis that will be resolved in Act III. Arabella's sister, Zdenka, has been acting as kind of Cyrano de Bergerac, writing love letters to Matteo, which express her own true feelings, but signing them 'Arabella'. Her family cannot afford to have two daughters out at once, and so she has been forced to assume the male persona 'Zdenko', and therefore cannot reveal her love for Matteo. In a bid to relieve Matteo of his frustration, she gives him the key to her hotel room, saying it is for Arabella's. [22] Mandryka, of course, overhears this, and the ensuing misunderstanding is the basis for the action of the third act. At Strauss's request, Hofmannsthal ornamented the theme of sexual repression with a couple of deft touches. After being dumped by Arabella, Lamoral seeks solace from her mother, who promises him something 'later'. And Mandryka takes to kissing the warbling Fiakermilli in revenge for his apparent betrayal. After all this, an orgiastic bacchanal is dramatically necessary to release the tension.[23] It could also be a remnant of Strauss's proposal that there be a 'colossal Croatian ballet' to

[20] The prelude might have been discussed at one of the few face to face meetings they had about the project.
[21] Hofmannsthal to Strauss, 22 December 1927, *Correspondence*, trans. Hanns Hammelmann and Ewald Osers (London: Collins, 1961), 462.
[22] For a fascinating take on the Freudian underpinnings of this theme see Beth Hart, 'Hugo von Hofmannsthal's Ideal Woman: A Psychoanalytic Perspective', *The Opera Quarterly*, 13(4), (Summer 1997), 93-121.
[23] It works particularly well when Act II and III are run together as in the current Wiener Staatsoper production (directed by Sven-Eric Bechtolf, premiered 2006).

round off Act II – rejected out of hand by Hofmannsthal.[24] The idea 'horrified' Hofmannsthal for the same reason he preferred *Der Meistersinger* over *Tannhäuser*: his goal of creating a believable *Spielwelt* could only be achieved when it had its roots in a real web of social relations. The ball was precisely the point at which the opera needed most fidelity to the 'authentic Vienna of the 1860s' and the ballet would ruin that.[25] By sneaking in a covert reference to the first scene of *Tannhäuser* – expanded into a ballet in the 1861 Paris version – Strauss managed to get his way after all.[26]

Just how similar Scene i of *Tannhäuser* is to the *Arabella* prelude can be seen by comparing both with the other famous operatic bacchanal from Saint-Saëns's *Samson et Delila* (1877). Saint-Saëns's interlude revives the primitive, exotic, violent nature of the ancient Greek Dionysic rites – as depicted in Euripides's *The Bacchae*, for example and the later Roman Bacchanalia. The *Tannhäuser* first scene and *Arabella* prelude, by contrast, each depict, in more or less graphic terms, the physical act of sex, which also formed an important part of the original pagan rituals.[27] Indeed, the *Arabella* prelude is so explicit that it is possible to pinpoint the exact moment when Matteo lights his post-coital cigarette. Although the first scene/ballet in *Tannhäuser* is an frenzied orgy of fauns, nymphs and youths urged on to greater and greater abandon by a group of bacchantes, it is also a metonymic representation of Venus and Tannhäuser's lovemaking. Strauss did not borrow motivic cells or specific chord progressions, but the techniques he used to suggest the erotic encounter are almost identical.

(1) Both begin with upwardly thrusting arpeggiated figures spanning around three octaves.

In the Wagner, this figure accompanies the Bacchantes' arrival onstage and is preceded by a fanfare and more innocent dancing by the nymphs; Strauss has Matteo dive straight in.[28] The figure in the Strauss is an extended version of a motif associated with Matteo (all five of Arabella's suitors have similar phallic motifs) and is heard in almost every bar of the prelude, matched by Zdenka's own supine, yielding motif. This image of the vigorous male and passive female that the prelude recycles is entirely in accordance with the scientific/therapeutic literature about sex that was distributed in Germany at the time.[29]

[24] See Strauss to Hofmannsthal, 21 December 1927; Hofmannsthal to Straus, 22 December 1927, *Correspondence*, 459, 464. Strauss no doubt had the crowd-pleasing 'Under Donner und Blitz' Polka from *Der Fledermaus* in mind here, where the whole cast is called upon to dance.

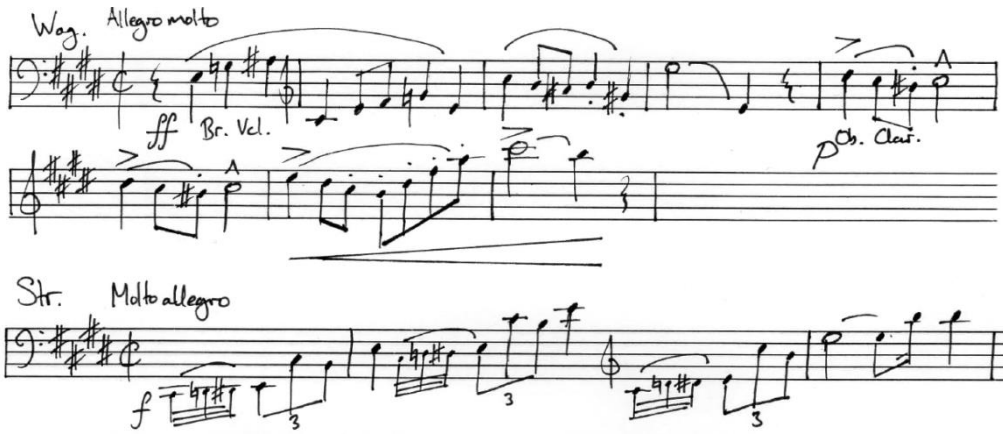
[25] Hofmannsthal uses the word 'authentic' three times here. While the story deliberately – according to Hofmannsthal – resembles a fairy tale – it was imperative that the external appearance be as close to reality as possible.

[26] The comparison I make here is with the original first scene which is closer in length and structure to the Arabella Act III prelude, although the 1861 version is much closer to Strauss's orchestral sound, especially the prominent horns that slip and slide dissonantly around before eventually alighting on the correct harmony.

[27] According to a female participant, 'When once the mysteries had assumed this promiscuous character, and men were mingled with women with all the licence of nocturnal orgies, there was no crime, no deed of shame, wanting.': quoted by Livy, *The History of Rome*, 'Book 39: The Bacchanalia in Rome and Italy', trans. Rev. Canon Roberts (J. M. Dent & Sons, Ltd., London, 1905).

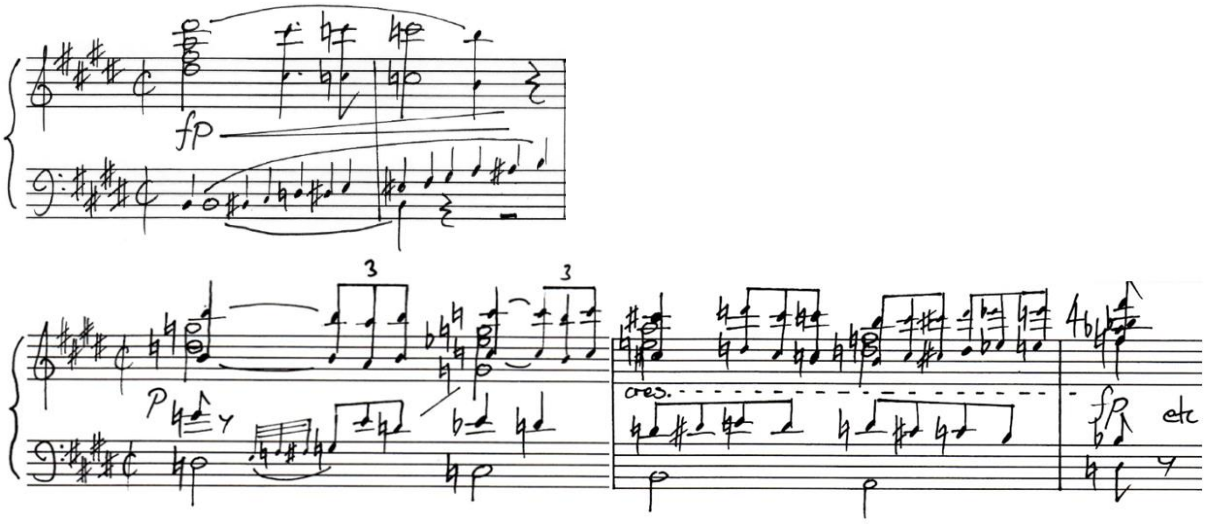
[28] I have gone for 'Bacchantes' over 'Bacchae' or 'Bassarids' because it is orthographically closest to Wagner's 'Bacchantinnen'.

[29] The Institut für Sexualwissenschaft, which ran in Berlin from 1918 t o 1933, for example, promoted an enlightened and tolerant attitude to sex, including homosexual sex and transvestism, but still adhered to these stereotypes.



Ex. 7.3 Wagner *Tannhäuser* I.i; *Arabella* (Act III: 0/1-3)

(2) On the local level they each use a combination of dynamics and dissonance in order to alternate between yearning and partial satisfaction, including:
(a) the swell to nothing.



Ex. 7.4 Wagner *Tannhäuser* I.i; *Arabella* Act III: 3/7-8

(b) Chromatic movement in upper and lower voices simultaneously (Ex. 7.4)
(c) The yearning chromatic appoggiatura: e.g. the dissonant c in the second bar of the Wagner excerpt in Ex 7.4 for Wagner. (This becomes, for example, a g♮ → g# over an e major chord in the first bar of the Strauss prelude.)
(d) The diminished seventh as an unstable point of repose. (Note: in both it acts as a substitute tonic, not dominant.)

(3) The mid-level mode of escalation is also identical. Wagner starts with a Schummanesque schizophrenic phrase, the first half of which is fevered desire, the second half, joyous celebration. On each return, the phase is truncated and there is a diminution of the rhythm. A similar pattern can be seen in the Strauss – although the diminution takes place after the sub-climax in this case.

(4) These mid-level escalations are then compiled into a wave-like structure, with a number of sub-climaxes, culminating in the climax itself, in both cases on a floating second inversion chord approached via an augmented sixth (Strauss's 'sixth' is written as a seventh, but it is the same

> chord). The only difference is that Wagner's climax is in the home key of E major (both preludes are in the same key), while Strauss cranks it up to F# major, although it does still – after some messing about – resolve onto the dominant B^7. The momentary feeling of timelessness Strauss creates at this point through superimposed metre is an effect he deploys at only two other places in the opera. One of these is at the spiritual highpoint at the end of the act (discussed below), the other is an equally transcendent moment in Act II (discussed in the next chapter).

There are other similarities, but the real interest here is in the differences. Whereas Wagner's music puts layers of distance between audience and action; Strauss's brings them together as if they are physically there witnessing what is going on. The most obvious example of this is the treatment of physical space. In the overture to *Tannhäuser*, rather than a smooth musical transition between the pilgrim's chorus and the Venusberg theme, the pilgrims disappear over the horizon as the Venusberg can then be heard far off in another direction. The effect is created not just by fading in and out, however, but also by altering the colour of the instrumentation. High notes travel farther than low, so high woodwinds and percussion increase the illusion of distance.[30] The result is to send the mind careering across great tracts of land – an anticipation of cinematic crane shots and tracking shots. The same effect is used in Scene i: it is not just the figures on the stage that emerge from the background and make their way forward: the fanfares and gambolling music also comes forward, only reaching the foreground when the bacchante arrive and the frolicking takes on a more threatening edge. Strauss uses crescendo only for the purpose of intensification; everything is immediately present.

Another difference is Wagner's exoticism. All the standard tropes of exotic music accompany the Greek mythological characters as they emerge from the roseate mists: light percussion – triangle, cymbal, and tambourine – as well as diminished sevenths and corresponding minor-third melodies. In opposition to the ungraspable abstraction of the exotic, Strauss offers the explicit thereness of the mundane. The sex we hear in the prelude is not the unachievable *jouissance* that the individual attributes to the (exotic) Other, but rather the overenthusiasm, the fits and starts, and the problems of coordination that characterize real sex – first-time encounters in particular. (For an example of the stopping and starting, see Act III 7/1-7/12. The best example of the failure of the voices to ever fully synchronize their efforts is the chromatic embroidery in the horns of an e-flat major chord resolving far too late onto the dominant at Act III, 2/5-6.)

The different ways in which leitmotifs in the two act further to give the first scene of *Tannhäuser* an abstract, generalized, universal quality, while the *Arabella* prelude is steeped in the particularity of the situation. The Venusberg music does not use of leitmotifs as such, but a reminiscence theme, as employed in French grand opera. It returns at various key points in the opera when Tannhäuser recalls his time at the Venusberg or is tempted to return. The individual motifs themselves are not attached to

[30] For Adorno, these distancing effects – which were best exemplified by the Venusberg music – are one of the ways in which Wagner's music tends towards 'phantasmagoria': Theodor W. Adorno, *In Search of Wagner* [*Versuch über Wagner*, 1952], trans. Rodney Livingstone (London: Verso, 2005), especially 74-85.

a particular character, emotion, or meaning. The Act III prelude of Arabella, however, is a different matter: it is comprised exclusively of leitmotifs which have already had two hours to accumulate quite specific meanings. Everyone who writes about Wagner warns that the leitmotifs in the mature operas should not be treated as aural semaphore, flagging up objects (spears, rings), performative utterances (curses, promises) or abstract concepts (honour, duty). But, while authors like Carolyn Abbate are right (especially in the cases of *Tristan und Isolde*, *Die Meistersinger* and *Parsifal*) in saying that 'Wagner's leitmotifs have no referential meaning', the same is not necessarily true for Strauss.[31] Indeed, although the leitmotifs in *Arabella* also contain an affective component, and so are better thought of as symbols rather than signs, they do function in the sort of referential manner that is rare in Wagner outside of *Das Rheingold* and *Die Walküre*.[32] Unlike *Meistersinger*, *Tristan* or Tannhäuser, where it is impossible to pick out a motif and say what it means, let alone that it retains that meaning whenever it is heard, the motifs in *Arabella* have a relatively determinate content that remains, more or less, constant over time. This doesn't quite allow the prelude to be read like a book; but it does conjure up a series of images that can be watched like a film. The passage Act III 7/1-7/12, referred to above, provides the perfect example of this. Indeed, I would speculate that the popularity of this kind of interlude among opera composers at this time might have had something to do with the clandestine distribution of stag movies.[33] Whether true or not, the prelude exhibits a kind of aural pornography ('pornophony') that is not present in the more abstract visions of *Tannhäuser*.

From Monteverdi at the end of the sixteenth century right through to Scriabin and Messiaen in the twentieth, there has been a tendency for the categories of spiritual and sexual love to merge into one another.[34] The history of this kind of music – in which Wagner and Strauss's contributions would play an important part – could certainly be written in terms of the changes in attitudes towards sex

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[31] Carolyn Abbate, 'Wagner "On Modulation" and "Tristan" ', *Cambridge Opera Journal*, 1 (1989), 45.

[32] One explanation for this is that Strauss was imitating the way in which Wagner's operas were consumed rather than the way in which Wagner intended them to be consumed. Christian Thorau has argued that Hans von Wolzogen's thematic guide to the *Ring* (*Thematischer Leitfaden durch die Musik zu Richard Wagners Festspiel 'Der Ring des Nibelungen* (1876)), and its successors, were a symptom of the embourgeoisement of Wagner's operas, and designed to make them appeal to a wider audience. Wagner's aversion to naming – including his refusal to label his own operas as 'music dramas' – meant he tolerated, rather than approved the practice. He would have preferred, according to Thorau, that the themes remain as unconscious, unnamed cues, rather than explicit signals. Christian Thorau, 'Guides for Wagnerites: Leitmotifs and Wagnerian Listening', *Wagner and His World*, ed. Thomas S. Grey (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 133-50. On Wagner's ambivalent attitude to naming see: Lydia Goehr, 'From Opera to Music Drama: Nominal Loss, Titular Gain', *Wagner and His World*, 65-86.

[33] Apart from the famous scene in *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk* (1934), which one reviewer (in the New York Sun, 1935) described as 'pornophony', Zemlinsky's *Der König Kandaules* (short score completed 1935) contains an equally sexually explicit Act III prelude which mirrors the situation in *Arabella*: the woman thinks she is sleeping with her husband, but it is really an imposter. Pornographic or 'stag' films of the period were short (around the same length as these preludes/interludes), sold secretively (they were made illegal in Austria in 1911), and the preserve of the elite, who had the means to watch and share them. Dave Thompson, *Black And White and Blue: Adult Cinema from the Victorian Age to the VCR* (Toronto: ECW, 2008).

[34] Bonnie Gordon shows how madrigal writers were all too aware of the ease with which sacred love collapsed into profane love and so set up rhetorical barriers to keep them apart: 'Chapter 3: Madrigalian desire: the convergence of love and sex in madrigals', *Monteverdi's Unruly Women: The Power of Song* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 86-130. The most visually arresting example of this tendency that spanned the arts is Gian Lorenzo Bernini's *Ecstasy of St. Theresa* (1647–1652).

brought about by the social upheavals of the previous three centuries.[35] However, reinforcing or challenging sexual norms is only a part of what is going in these instrumental interludes. The confusion of sacred and profane love means that physical or sexual love, which is relatively easy to stage, can be used to represent whatever it is that is considered sacred, or even to confer sacred status on certain ideas. *Tannhäuser* might have fed off the whore-virgin mythology – a piece of mental bookkeeping that allowed the nineteenth-century gent to keep his pure, chaste wife and daughters in a different column from those disreputable types he slept with on the side – but it would be a mistake to think that Tannhäuser, Elisabeth or Venus are only meant to represent real men or women. To the extent that the opera looks forward to the revolutionary ideas of the Zurich essays ('Das Kunstwerk der Zukunft', 1849; 'Das Judenthum in der Musik', 1850/69; 'Oper und Drama', 1851), Tannhäuser embodies humanity as a whole – both men and women; Venus and Elisabeth embody sin and salvation, respectively.[36] On a mundane level, men – no more, it might be added, than women – are always going to be tempted by the siren call of extra-marital sex, and undeserved grace is always going to be necessary in order to forgive it. But the irresistible temptations of the Venusberg, not to mention the special need to return there when things go wrong, exemplify the more general condition of mankind as fallen. Indeed, irredeemably fallen: the Rousseauian (and latterly Hegelian) idea of a just politics, where the freedom of the individual and the good of the collective coincide, requires the intervention of some external, transcendental, force.[37] Although a good materialist, Wagner – along with many other left-leaning radicals in the 1840s – accepted Feuerbach's basic tenet that man could not prevent himself from attaching divine significance to ordinary objects and ideas.[38] (One lasting legacy of this is Marx's idea of the fetishized – or sacralised – commodity.) *Tannhäuser*, therefore, can be seen as Wagner's attempt to align Christian grace and redemption with the transcendental force – the world-historical force, in Hegelian terms – necessary to bring about revolution. Of course Wagner knew, as Rousseau knew, that such a force was materially fictitious, and yet faith in it was necessary to bring about the social change he wished to see.

In the Strauss prelude, the metaphysical, external world-historical force is absent. This is not to suggest that the sacred is missing from this music; instead, it is the act of sex itself – with all the fum-

[35] I am thinking about Foucault's *History of Sexuality* (*La Volonté de savoir*, 1976) and more recently Faramerz Dabhoiwala's *The Origins of Sex: A History of the First Sexual Revolution* (London: Allen Lane, 2012), which discuss the issue in terms of political, economic and intellectual developments between 1600 and 1900.

[36] Here I am drawing on James Garratt, *Music, Culture and Social Reform in the Age of Wagner* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), particularly the section on the Zurich essays, 157-77.

[37] The last chapter of Geneva version of *The Social Contract* (1761) is on the need for a 'civil religion' – the basis, if not directly, for Wagner's art religion. On the importance of civil religion to Rousseau's project, see Critchley, *The Faith of the Faithless*, 67-78

[38] For the influence of Feuerbach's *The Essence of Christianity* (*Das Wesen des Christentums*, 1841) on the Young Hegelians see: Part I: Hegel in Frederick Engels, *Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy* (*Ludwig Feuerbach und der Ausgang der klassisches deutschen Philosophie*, 1886).

bling and misplaced elbows that the real thing often entails – that has assumed the value of the sacred.[39]

THE WIND-UP DOLL CHRONICLE

Opera goers love Zerbinetta, but it takes something – or rather someone – special to make Fiakermilli bearable. I want to suggest that this is the result of a deliberate strategy by Strauss to ensure that Fiakermilli did not surpass Arabella in the way that Zerbinetta does Ariadne.[40]

Hofmannsthal's original idea for *Ariadne auf Naxos* (first version 1912, second version 1916) was one of 'ironic equipoise' in which the two incompatible sides of romantic love would be combined into an 'allegorical unity'.[41] The debt to *Tannhäuser* here is clear, but they failed to emulate Wagner's success in managing to make Elizabeth as appealing as Venus. Elizabeth's memorable aria 'Dich, teure Halle, grüss ich wieder' helps; the fact that it is actually her who wins the titular 'Sängerkrieg auf Wartburg' (even though none of the characters notices) makes sure of it. Zerbinetta, supported by her *commedia dell'arte* troupe, symbolizes carnal desire and infidelity; whereas Ariadne – a re-imagining of how the Wagnerian heroine would have looked if drawn from Greek instead of German myth – represents constancy and spiritual love. However, despite Hofmannsthal's initial plan to balance the physical and spiritual components of love by having heroic and comic opera coexist as equals, he became far more interested in Ariadne's transformation at the end of the opera.[42] Perhaps due to a misunderstanding between the collaborators, Hofmannsthal's new emphasis on Ariadne's love-death was not served well by Strauss: the strained orchestral scraping that accompanies her transfiguration is easily outshined by the sparkling brilliance of Zerbinetta's coquettish aria.[43]

If the latest opera was to succeed in its didactic purpose of providing a template for New Woman along the lines of Shaw's *Joan of Arc*, it was essential that the same mistake was not made with Arabella and Fiakermilli.[44] However, there were a number of extra problems to contend with. In *Ariadne*, the two female characters are archetypes – the tart with a heart and the one-man woman – whereas

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[39] Eva Illouz argues that one of the characteristics of modern romance, which arose in the 1920s, was a shift from 'religious devotion to another' towards a 'cult of sexuality': *Consuming the Romantic Utopia: Love and the Cultural Contradictions of Capital* (Berkeley: California University Press, 1997), 181.

[40] Without wishing to get into the hoary artist intention debate, I am not suggesting he set out to make Fiakermilli annoying, rather that she ended up becoming so out of an intuitive feel for her symbolic role in the opera. Indeed after Clemens Kraus asked him to rewrite the part for a 1942 revival in Salzburg, Strauss agreed that she was an unsatisfactory character but, significantly, not bad enough to warrant a revision: William Mann, *Richard Strauss: A Critical Study of his Operas* (London: Cassell, 1964), 253.

[41] Karen Forsyth, Ariadne auf Naxos *by Richard Strauss and Hugo Hofmannsthal: Its Genesis and Meaning* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), 35.

[42] Chadwick Jenkins, 'A View From Death: *Ariadne auf Naxos* as Failed Totality', *Current Musicology* (Spring 2004), 69-95; 78.

[43] According to Jenkins, whereas Strauss only ever regarded the opera as 'a trifle', Hofmannsthal saw it as 'an attempt to produce an ethical totality': 'View from Death', 80. Many critics are disparaging about the ending. See, for example, Theodor W. Adorno, 'Richard Strauss. Born June 11, 1864', trans. Samuel Weber, Shierry Weber, *Perspectives of New Music*, 4(1) (Autumn - Winter, 1965), 14-32; 18.

[44] Hofmannsthal to Strauss 22 December 1927, *Correspondence*, 460.

the realism of the later opera required that Arabella to have a more complex personality. Although she is capable of Zerbinetta-like fickleness – taking a fancy to Matteo one minute, and then casually dropping him the next – her sexual desire is never allowed to ruffle her calm exterior. Her three key moments in the opera (the end of Act I, Dismissal scene earlier in Act II and the Forgiveness scene in Act III) are of a subdued nature. The importance of libido is revealed instead by proxy through the Zdenka-Matteo subplot, and in the Act III prelude in particular. Instead, her dissatisfaction with the three counts – decent enough chaps with the requisite amount of cash – stems from their inability to make her fall in love with her: a condition in which in non-mythical real life agape and eros are inseparably combined.[45] Thus it would not have been possible to set up a musical distinction between sexual and pure love, as in either *Tannhäuser* or *Ariadne*.

In the libretto Fiakermilli's part looks slight, but in performance, because of the high tessitura and the fiendishly difficult roulades, she has a prominence that serves to punctuate the Act II finale. Like Zerbinetta's high coloratura in *Adriadne*, the meaning of Fiakermilli's yodelling is dependent on the performer: in the best of the available video recordings, Edita Gruberovna is content to leave it as a tinkling laugh, whereas Gwendolyn Bradley teases out the innuendo, for example.[46] The latter interpretation is certainly justified by the libretto: Mandryka sits beside her on the sofa (which translates into her sitting in his lap in most recorded productions) and asking her for a kiss – 'Milli gib mir ein Bussl!'. It also represents the fizzing, frothing and overflowing of all the Champagne Mandryka is ordering for everyone and guzzling himself. Strauss makes much of the disjunction between Fiakermilli's over-the-top merriment and Mandryka's surly outbursts by emphasizing the already unsettling nature of her virtuosic vocal line.

In her first interruption (Act II: 106/1-107/5), designed to cause Mandryka maximum embarrassment, Fiakermilli asks him if the ball can have its queen back. His raving about the key stops suddenly and her gay polka assembles itself out of thin air. Then, when she has said her piece it dissolves back into nothingness again allowing Mandryka to continue where he left off with renewed vigour. In the second (Act II: 120/1-121/1), the same polka melody introduces her wordless assent to Mandryka's suggestion that he sing a song. The key is B-flat, but on her long, high *d*, the orchestra decides to repeat the fragment in an unexpected G-major. The welter of chromatic appoggiaturas in the final flourish then further undermines the stability giving the impression that the crystalline purity of the voice is going to shatter.

The drunken frivolity of Act II, lead by the comic Slav, is an obvious allusion to *Der Fledermaus* (1874), and Fiakermilli's polka aria and yodelling are surely fulfilling the same crowd-pleasing role as

[45] She complains to Elemer in the first act, that although the counts have courted her for the whole of carnival, none of them had managed to release her heart: 'und immer noch habt ihr mir nicht das Herz erlöst'.
[46] *Arabella*, dir. Otto Schenk, cond. Sir Georg Solti, Wiener Philharmoniker, perf. Gundola Janowitz et al [1977] (Decca, 2008) DVD. *Arabella*, dir. John Cox, cond. Bernard Haitink, London Philharmonic, perf. Ashley Putnam et al [1984] (Warner, 2003) DVD.

Adele's Laughing Song and the 'Unter Donner und Blitzen' Polka.[47] But there is a less obvious reference here to the role of Olympia in Offenbach's opéra bouffe *The Tales of Hoffmann* (*Les contes d'Hoffmann*, 1881). This would explain the otherwise incomprehensible four-bar sound effect (Act II: 43/1-4), which occurs in the middle of her short aria 'Die Wiener Herrn verstehn sich' earlier in the act. The figure has no relation to any of the leitmotifs, and, although it does serve as an introduction to the waltz that follows it, the mechanical whirring, or sound of a clockwork mechanism being wound up is the most striking thing about it.

The words here exemplify Hofmannsthal's practice of transferring mythical/mystical depth into the surface metaphors of the characters' utterances. Whereas Ariadne is transformed into the seven stars of the Pleiades at the end of the opera, Fiakermilli only sings of Vienna's astronomers noticing a new star in the firmament – Arabella the Reigning Queen. Fiakermilli's metaphor is scientific rather than a mythical for good reason. On the one hand she is the human symbol for the carnival, embodying the pleasures of the flesh, particularly those of wine, woman and song. In the complex of ideas with which Hofmannsthal was working, science and the money economy were intimately bound up with one another and, if Mandrkya wants to partake of any of these things, he just has to take out his wallet and there they are.[48] On the other, in *Ariadne* Hofmannsthal set up a dichotomy between the human world of Zerbinetta and her troupe and the celestial world of Ariadne and Bacchus. Here the virtuous woman is herself earthbound and partial to animalistic pleasures herself, and so it was necessary to debase the wrong sort of sex further to the level of the mechanistic.

Hofmannsthal and Strauss imported a number of ideas from Offenbach to ensure that Fiakermilli was more an uncanny wind-up doll than a tempting flesh and blood soubrette. In an article about Offenbach's Olympia, Heather Hadlock shows that in the original E.T.A Hofmann stories, female singers are not performers so much as 'performed-upon'; their song does not emanate from their own soul, but their bodies act as conduits for music from a transcendent beyond.[49] The soprano singing Olympia is successful insofar as she can obliterate her own humanity and become an object of marvel. Strauss borrowed for Fiakermilli many of the features of 'Les oiseaux dans la charmille' that Hadlock identifies as designed to create the music-box effect of Olympia's aria. Her four-square polka, like Olympia's waltz, settles for generic accompaniments and rhythms. For most of their time on stage, each is robbed of the expressive power of speech, which is often confined to the single syllable 'Aah'. The rapid vocal-

[47] Mandryka and Orlovsky are both Slavs, the most popular choice for the funny foreigner in Viennese comedies of the nineteenth century. Hofmannsthal was deliberately trying to subvert the stereotype here, a process he started in the earlier *Der Unbestechliche* (1923).

[48] 'The calculating exactness of practical life which has resulted from a money economy corresponds to the ideal of natural science, namely that of transforming the world into an arithmetical problem and fixing every one of its parts in a mathematical formula': Georg Simmel, 'The Metropolis and Mental Life' ('Die Großstadt und das Geistesleben', 1903), *The Blackwell City Reader*, ed. Gary Bridge, Sophie Watson (London: Blackwell, 2010), 103-10; 105. The boom years of the 1870s when *Arabella* was set were fuelled by scientific and technological innovation. This idea will be explored in more detail in the following chapter.

[49] Heather Hadlock, 'Return of the Repressed: The prima donna from Hoffmann's "Tales" to Offenbach's "Contes", *Cambridge Opera Journal*, 6(3) (Nov., 1994), 221-243; 223.

ise offers no opportunity for vibrato, rubato or other expressive devices. The detached, arpeggiated high notes, like high woodwinds, have no individual character.[50] And there is less of the chromatic inflection that brings Zerbinetta's character to life. But whereas Olympia's aria closes on a perfect cadence and there follows a pause for the audience to show their appreciation, which they always take full advantage of, there is no room for a break in the action where Fiakermilli can come out of character and reveal the human side of the soprano inhabiting the role.

None of this explains why opera goers don't like Fiakermilli – Olympia's 'Les oiseaux dans la charmille' is nothing if not a crowd pleaser. The climax of Olympia's aria is the point at which the doll breaks down and the performer has to step out from behind her robotic mask and execute the most daring coloratura of the aria. As Hadlock explains, the paradox is that, in aria that is meant to 'efface' the presence of the 'virtuoso performer', it is precisely at the point of it all going wrong that the prima donna reasserts herself and 'we cannot avoid acknowledging the particular woman doing it'.[51] Whether deliberate or not, instead having the performer fake the breakdown of the vocal mechanism, Strauss has written such difficult music here that – with only a few rare exceptions – it actually breaks the soprano performing it.[52] The fragile, glassy tone that threatens to shatter usually does. The song that the audience has paid good money to see is revealed to be as superficial a pleasure as champagne-induced merriment or bought sex.

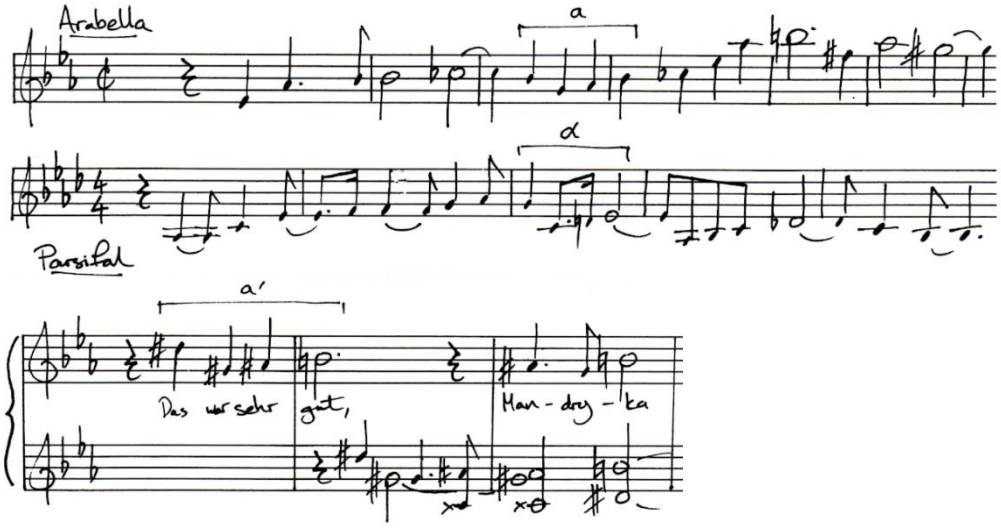
UNDOING *PARSIFAL*

One of Adorno's abiding criticisms of Strauss was that the dazzling novelty of his pre-*Rosenkavalier* output did not, with hindsight, constitute genuine innovation at all. Adorno likened him to a bourgeois industrialist squeezing greater and greater productivity out of the same tired old machinery. I want to turn this idea on its head and argue that, in the finale of *Arabella*, Strauss wasn't tuning the old Wagnerian engine to optimize efficiency, so much as dismantling it, polishing the individual parts and then displaying them separately for a more refined effect.

The reworking of the *Tannhäuser* bacchanal shows that Strauss agreed with Nietzsche that the chastity seemingly extolled in *Parsifal* is an incitement to go 'against nature'.[53] In *Arabella*, spiritual love is presented as a complement of the erotic, not a mutually exclusive opposition. The indulgences of the carnival season that fill the first two acts (and overflow into the beginning of the third) are counterbal-

[50] Hadlock, 'Return of the Repressed', 238-9.
[51] Hadlock, 'Return of the Repressed', 240.
[52] Some sopranos today do have super-human abilities and seem to be able pull off these passages without effort. However, this does not mean that the composer necessarily wanted such perfection: if the Queen of the Night's revenge aria is sung too well, for example, it loses its edge. Stravinsky complained of the same problem affecting the opening of the *Rite of Spring*: as bassoonists became accustomed to playing in that high tessitura, the passage lost the rawness he was after – and now the whole piece often suffers from being played too accurately and cleanly. It is at least possible, then, that Strauss knew exactly what he was doing here.
[53] 'Die Predigt der Keuschheit bleibt eine Aufreizung zur Widernatur: ich verachte Jedermann, der den Parsifal nicht als Attentat auf die Sittlichkeit empfindet'. Nietzsche, *Nietzsche contra Wagner* [written 1888-9, published 1895], *Nietzsche's Werke*, Band VIII (Leipzig, C. G. Naumann, 1899), 200.

anced with a domestic interpretation of the ritual of absolution that marks its end and the beginning of Lent. Sensual excess and spiritual purity are equal parts of the same ritual complex: sin cannot be expunged from a society, but a certain measure of order can be imposed on it. Nevertheless, the relationship with *Parsifal* is clear: the Lenten purification alluded to in *Arabella* is a necessary precursor to Easter celebrations, the holiest of the Christian calendar, and *Parsifal* famously culminates in the Good Friday celebration. The precedent for the ritual of forgiveness performed by Arabella for Mandryka – for questioning Arabella's virtue in the Matteo-Zdenka misunderstanding – is the Grail music from Act I of *Parsifal*, and also heard in the Act I prelude. Strauss freely acknowledged his debt to *Parsifal* here with a melody that follows almost precisely the curve of the opening theme, even though many of the note lengths and intervals have been altered.



Ex. 7.6 Wagner, *Parsifal*, Vorspiel, bb. 1-5; *Arabella*, Act III: 139/1-6, 140/14-141/2

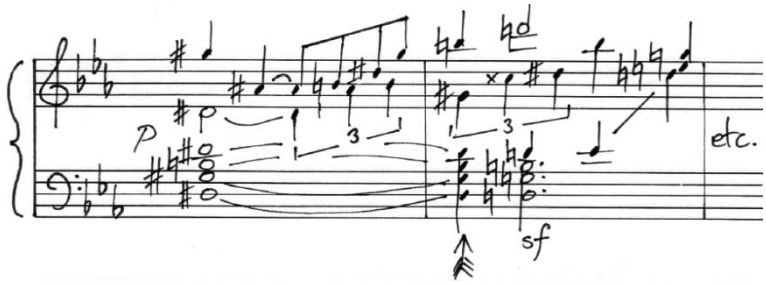
The connection between the two is confirmed when Strauss develops the motif a into a', which now more clearly resembles the motif α in the Grail theme, from which it derives. The finale of *Arabella* comprises a series of short, almost self-contained, sections, but here the focus is on just two, which each feature separately one of the technical devices Wagner superimposed to create the spiritual affect in the Grail music: one is the 'uncanny' chord progression, the other 'oceanic time'.

At the climax of the early portion of the overture, Wagner introduced the following chord progression: A-flat: iib → [e minor]. The e minor chord functions harmonically as a replacement for the A-flat: Ic → V^7 by resolving, via iii, onto I. The purpose of this vagrant chord, which has no simple relationship with the prevailing key of A-flat major, is to inject a feeling of mystery or magic into the music. When it occurs in the opera proper, it accompanies the divine light shining down from heaven onto the Grail. Richard Cohn, after a 1930 harmonic treatise of Sigfrid Karg-Elert, calls a chord progression between major and minor chords with semi-tonal movement in each voice a 'hexatonic pole'.[54] He has

[54] Richard Cohn, 'Hexatonic Poles and the Uncanny in Parsifal', *The Opera Quarterly* 22(2) (2007), 230–248.

shown that composers around the turn of the century associated it with the uncanny, suggesting that this was because it agreed with the psychological definition of the term at the time – the recognition of the self in the other, the recognition of the other in the self, the return of the repressed, and so on.[55] Note how Wagner has augmented this uncanny effect by altering the iib to a diminished 7th on d-natural and then – in order to make the shock of the e minor all the greater – at the end of the bar anticipated the Ic that doesn't arrive with an e-flat in the bass and a c-natural in the melody.

The staircase music is mostly comprised of four-bar phrases and diatonic harmony, gently shifting into different key areas. Apart from the allusion to the *Lebewohl* sonata, and the kinaesthetic representation of Arabella's motion down the stairs, the effect is of a simple chorale. This already beautiful music is elevated to something special, however, by Strauss's subtle deployment of a chromatic shift – Ic → g-minor: ic – at the moment Mandryka turns around and notices Arabella.



Ex. 7.7 *Arabella* Act III: 139/8-9

In the harmonic-language of *Arabella* this chord progression performs a similar function to the 'hexatonic pole' *Parsifal*. It also occurs in the dismissal scene in Act II, for example, where it reveals that, from amongst her three suitors, Arabella did have some real affection for Dominik – the first man to tell her he loved her. When it occurs in *Parsifal*, the uncanny chord progression does so against a backdrop of shimmering timeless stasis; here, in this final scene, the chromatic shift generates much more restrained effect, inflecting a simple melody with a moment of magic.

The final scene of *Arabella* was not the first time Strauss had employed musical stasis to evoke a sense of spiritual rest or homecoming. Ståle Wikshåland has recently identified something he calls 'oceanic time' *Elektra*.[56] Taking his cue from a line in Elektra's opening monologue, he follows a series of links – Romain Rolland to Freud to Mary Bonaparte's well-known article 'Time and the Unconscious' – to arrive at a notion of 'oceanic time'. It is exemplified by the experience of timelessness in childhood – particularly the pleasure of the suckling infant – and is characterized by 'a wonderful, oceanic feeling

[55] Richard Cohn, 'Uncanny Resemblances: Musical Signification in the Freudian Age', *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 57(2) (2004), 285–323.
[56] Ståle Wikshåland, 'Elektra's Oceanic Time: Voice and Identity in Richard Strauss', *19th-Century Music*, 31(2) (Nov 2007), 164-174; 169.

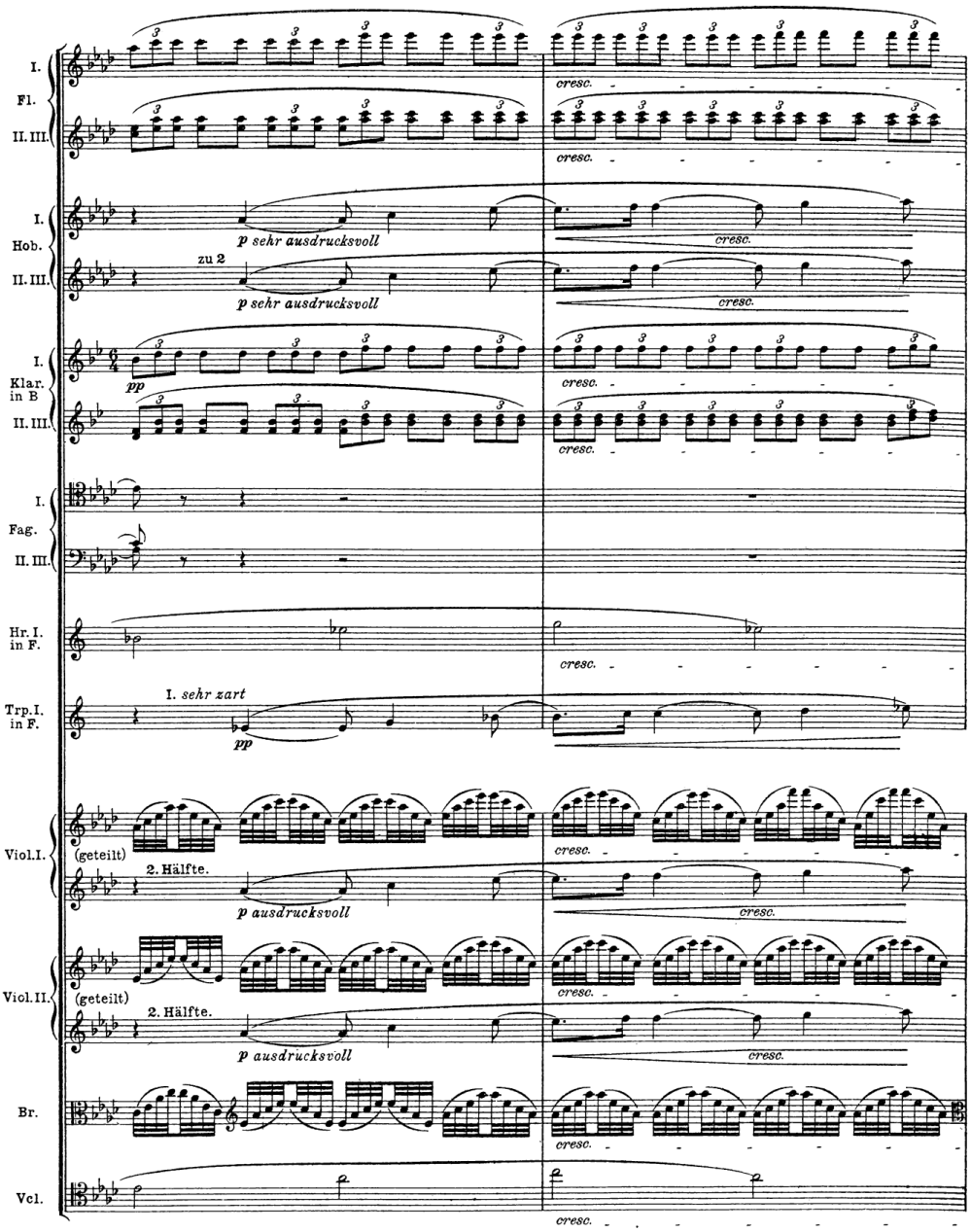
of being part of all things'.[57] According to Bonaparte, two of the four situations in adulthood when this feeling resurfaces are the intoxication of love, which, with its remarkable idealization of the loved object, allows the lover to transcend time, to vow eternal love, and to ignore reality' and in ecstatic states of mystic experience', 'where subjective feelings of eternity are projected and given an objective existence that effectively conquers time'.[58]

Wikshåland does not mention an earlier link in his chain of influence: Wagner was already talking about 'oceanic time' decades before Rolland, Freud, Hofmannsthal or Strauss. In 'The Art of the Future', Wagner wrote: 'The Christian parted from the shores of life … . Farther and more unbounded he sought out the seas in order finally to be completely alone in the ocean, between the sea and the heavens'. The Greek, in Wagner's marine metaphor, never sailed too far from the shore where he could hear the 'melodic rhythm of the oars', keep his eye on the 'dance of the wood nymphs', and hear the words sung in the 'temple from the mountain heights'. [59] All a rather poetic way of saying that, in Greek music, *harmonia* was always bound to *logos* (word) and *rhythmos* (rhythm). In Wagner's Hegelian view of music history, the 'Christian' had contributed simultaneously sounding harmony. This had reached its highpoint in the devotional polyphony of Palestrina which allowed the listener to float suspended in an ocean of harmony far from the safe shores of word or rhythm. The goal of music history would only be realized when this 'absolute harmony' was recombined with rhythm – as Beethoven had done in his symphonies – and then finally with word, as it was his task to attempt in his 'neo-heathen' drama.[60]

There is a long association in Western music between 'mystical experience' or the 'intoxication of love' and the ability of the composer to suspend the ordinary flow of time. In the Grail music, first heard in the overture, Wagner was building on the experience of writing the intoxicated music of the *Leibestod*. The basic idea is to obscure the sense of metre through a combination of the following: playing different rhythms off one another, syncopation, and alternating between different divisions of the beat. But the effect in *Parsifal* is more refined. The opening theme (*Grundthema*), which is repeated in the trumpet in the two bars reproduced as Ex. 7.8, avoids a firm sense of a beat with syncopations, ties over the bar line and mixing up rhythmic values. This already arrhythmic melody floats in an ocean of timelessness. The effect is created by using separate divisions of the beat in winds and strings that conflict with each other in multiple ways. Firstly the strings are in 4/4 while the winds are in 6/4, setting up a 3 against 2 in each half bar. Then the wind beats are divided into triplets, which means a 9 against 8 (or properly 16) pattern. But the shimmering quality of the music – what puts it 'between the

[57] Elektra sings: 'Ich weiss doch, dass sie all warten,/weil ich den Reigen führern muss, und ich/kann nicht, der Ozean, der ungeheure,/der zwanzigfache Ozean begräbt/mir jedes Glied mit seiner Wucht'. Romain Rolland's phrase from a letter to Freud, quoted in Wikshåland, 'Oceanic Time', 169.
[58] Marie Bonaparte, 'Time and the Unconscious', *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis* 21 (1940), 427–68; as summarized by Wikshåland, 'Oceanic Time', 169-70.
[59] Richard Wagner, 'The Artwork of the Future' ('Das Kunstwerk der Zukunft', 1849), translation in Carl Dahlhaus, *The Idea of Absolute Music* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1989), 24.
[60] Dahlhaus, *Absolute Music*, 24.

sea and the heavens' – is that it is also an 8 against 8 pattern, where two different interpretations of the same 4/4 metre slip in and out of phase with one another.



Ex. 7.8 Wagner, *Parsifal*, bars 9-10

Strauss took this background feature of Wagner and foregrounded it, refining it still further in the process. The key of F major is the culmination of a global plan that operates throughout the opera, and also locally in this scene which moves from E flat, through E major and finally to F major, which it approaches via a long dominant C major preparation. The whole section is really just an embellishment of a static F major chord marking the fact that they are 'betrothed and bonded', 'forever', 'throughout all that may come to [them]'. However, Strauss gives it a blissful, timeless quality by superimposing three

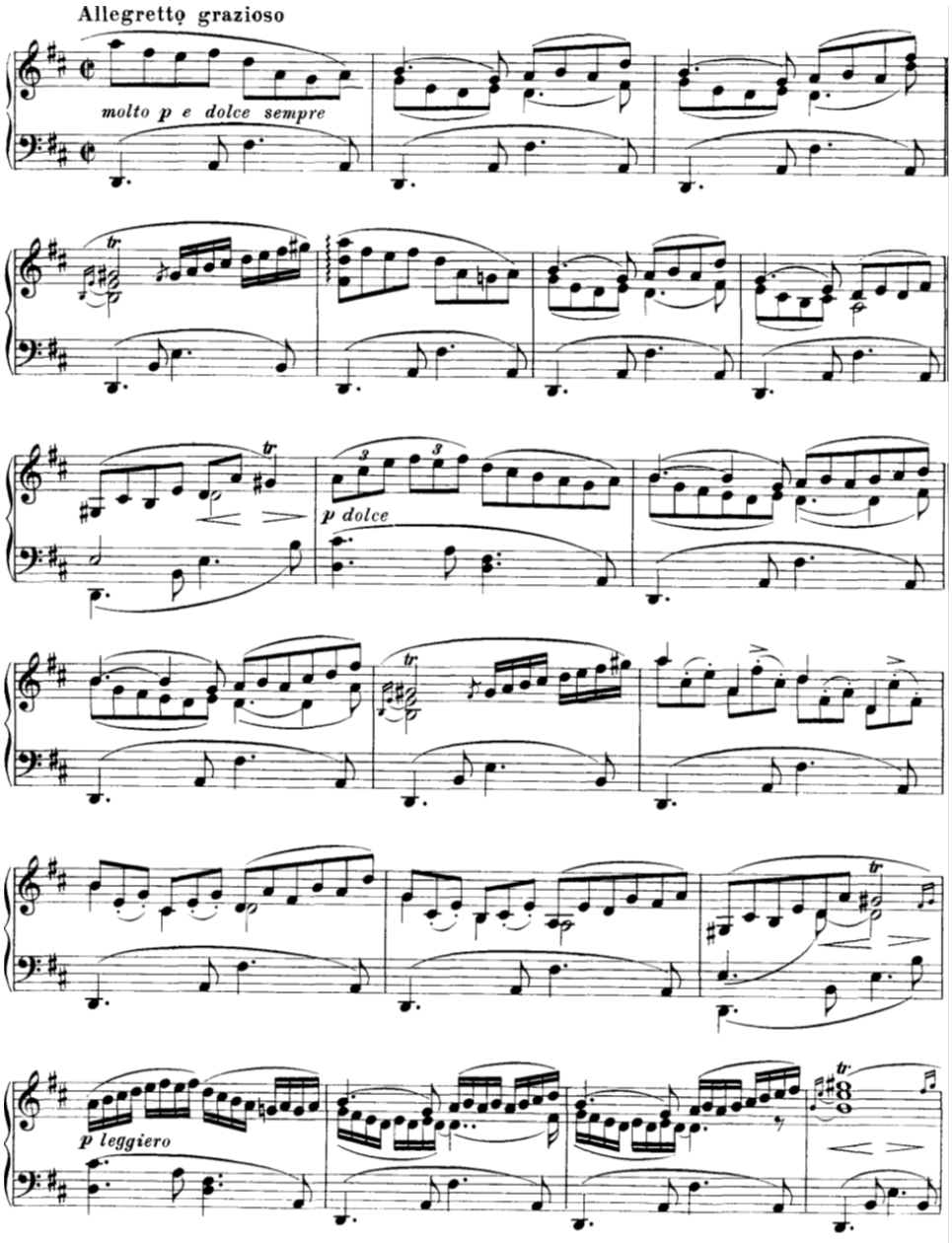
separate time signatures and three separate textures which do not coincide exactly with the three time signatures. The 'Der Richtige' melody has been turned into a fast waltz in 3/4; then there is an ornamental texture comprising one of Arabella's motifs, tossed backwards and forwards between violin I and flute, in 3/4, and a dechromaticized version of another of her motifs in the cellos in 2/4; the voices then float away in 12/4, accompanied in the background by bassoons and one desk of cellos.[61] There is a brief interjection of homophonic F minor on the word 'Wehtun' (151/6-8), but even this is drawn into the multi-tempo scheme with its 3/4 – 3/2 hemiola. There are other subtle effects: the tremolando in violin II continues the glistening ornamental line that permeates the scene; the feeling of timelessness is increased by the uncertainty about the placing of the barline in the un-notated 12/4 – bar 150/8 could be considered as an upbeat or a downbeat. The scoring is as delicate as that in the rest of the scene, with strings divided into six, and basses tacit until Mandryka joins at 152/2. The result is similar to the passage in Act II when Arabella says goodbye to Lamoral (75/10-82/4), but the sense of mystery has been heightened by the greater temporal ambiguity. Further, in the earlier section, Arabella and Lamoral inhabited their own distinct realms of texture and time signature, which were coincident there. Here Arabella and Mandryka share the same time signature and texture, which then ensconces them within the dreamlike orchestral sound-world. Again, the effect, is more subtle than the corresponding passage in *Parsifal* because Strauss hasn't just avoided magic chord progressions, there isn't any harmonic movement at all. Furthermore, it was standard in the songs of Schubert and Schumann to wall off the section of the song that marked an escape into nature by having it in a distant key – that is building something akin to the uncanny progression into the harmonic structure. But even on the large scale, the F major here has been approached via C major, so there is nothing otherworldly about the key signature in this position either.

The flatness that results from this dismantling of the Grail music, a musical equivalent of Hofmannsthal's 'depth on the surface', does have a musical precedent, but it is not in Wagner. When Berg said that Strauss hadn't learned anything from Brahms he was talking about how Strauss derived his techniques of motivic manipulation from Wagner and Liszt.[62] Brahms skilfully deployed oceanic time for those transcendent moments, especially involving love; the setting of the words 'aber die Liebe ist die größte unter ihnen' in the fourth of *Vier Ernste Gesänge* is perhaps the most beautiful example. But in the late piano music there are a number of examples where expression is only allowed in one parameter of the music. The best example of this, which also has the same feeling of 'immanent transcendence', is the central section of Op. 118, no. 5, 'Romanze' (1893) The piece is in F major, and so this

[61] The first motif is associated with Arabella at the ball, and the second appears most often when Arabella is being talked of but is not present.

[62] Berg probably didn't know the early C minor Piano Quartet Op. 13 (1885) in which one can hear fleeting premonitions of *Der Rosenkavalier* emerge from the sonorities of Brahms's F minor Piano Quintet Op. 34 (1864). For more on the early influence of Brahms – the so-called *Brahmsschwärmerei* – see: R. Larry Todd, 'Strauss before Liszt and Wagner: Some Observations', *Richard Strauss: New Perspectives on the Composer and his Music*, ed. Bryan Gilliam (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1992), 3-40.

section does have the feeling of an otherworldly D major. But, considering the piece in Schenkerian terms, the outer sections are each a prolongation of $\hat{3}$ in F major, which turns into a prolongation of a $\hat{5}$ in D major; the melody of the piece is effectively just an *a* from beginning to end. (And this has structural function when the six pieces are considered as a whole.) The increasing movement of the embellishment is undermined by the stasis of the harmony and underlying four-square phrasing. This too has the floating timelessness of the Grail music in *Parsifal*, but it has nothing of the illusion of spiritual depth. Although the initial breezy cheerfulness continues on and on, it speaks of only of emptiness. Strauss's extended embellishment of the F major chord isn't nearly so bleak, embodying a more genuine feeling of happiness, but it similarly manages to avoid the sense that there is a deeper metaphysical source.



Ex 7.9 Brahms, 'Sechs Klavierstücke', op. 118, no. 5, 'Romanze', bars 17ff.

When the uncanny chord progression is combined with the floating melody and the oceanic time of the background winds and strings in *Parsifal*, it makes for an almost overwhelming feeling of profundity. Even for those who can see that it's all done with smoke and mirrors, the effect in performance can be overwhelming. Judging from what he has done in *Arabella*, Strauss agreed with Nietzsche's assessment of *Parsifal* that this kind of manipulation was too much for modern audiences. Hofmannsthal too had spoken of the need for 'depth on the surface' and that is what Strauss tried to create by dismantling the Grail music and, instead of piling on the technical effects in order to browbeat the listener into submission, confined himself to one magical technique at a time. Strauss, then, has dismantled the Grail music from *Parsifal*, taking two elements – mysterious chord progressions and timeless rhythmic ambiguity – and extended each to create a separate mood of ecstasy that is situated in the real-world experience of the protagonists. The result, far from being ironic, camp or kitschy, achieves a delicate authenticity by *only just* succeeding.[63]

* * *

It would be easy to construct an argument that said Strauss's reworking of the Wagnerian precedents amounts to a secularisation of Wagnerian metaphysics. Like Nietzsche, Strauss did not believe in outsides, like Kant's thing-in-itself, or the Schopenhauerian Will: what you see is what you get. Thus man is not fallen, either in the Augustinian sense of original sin, or in the Hegelian sense that he has not yet reached his historical goal of absolute freedom. There is no need to feel guilty about one's sexual or other urges, which are animal and therefore natural. On the other hand, however, there is no romantic solution, either the world historical force for change in *Tannhäuser*, represented by Elisabeth's purity, or vaguer type of consolatory function, as the Grail in *Parsifal*. The music of *Arabella* effects a Nietzschean transvaluation of all values, good and evil are transformed and transported into the secular world where ordinary sex and ordinary marriage sit comfortably alongside one another.

But this is not what is happening at all. Although it does not have the rigid partition between good and evil to be found in *Tannhäuser* (taken to pantomimic extremes in *Lohengrin*) there is still a good-bad valuation here: sophisticated high-art techniques associated with the transcendent for some aspects of the secular world; and operetta techniques, which vulgarly display the vocal expertise of the soprano associated with the mechanical for others. Strauss's transformation of the Wagner precedents leaves intact the markers for spirituality: whereas in Wagner they were exaggerated and piled on top of

[63] In Nietzschean terms, Wagner's Dionysian illusion of transcendence has been replaced by an Apollonian transfiguration of reality. Art 'takes over a host of moods and feelings engendered by religion … ', that is, art allows us to enjoy religious sentiment without the need to buy into its content (*HH* I, 150). Didactic art, art that serves as a model in our modern age, has to '[signpost] the future' and this can only be done through the 'concealing and reinterpreting' nature of Apollonian art. Apollonian art is that which 'transfigures' reality (*HH* IIa, 174). Friedrich Nietzsche, *Human all too Human*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 81, 255.

one another to suggest great forces at play, now they have been reduced to the size of the individual. This is a musical echo of Weber's belief that, in a disenchanted age, monumental art would only result in 'miserable monstrosities' and that religious feeling could only be felt 'pianissimo' 'in personal human situations'.[64]

Strauss's music for in *Arabella* is not a secularization of Wagner, but a redistribution of its sacred elements; it only looks like secularization because everything is toned down to match the this-world-ness and individuality to which it is attached. Critchley argues that political change requires faith – and Hofmannsthal and Strauss operas are famously all about transformation – but could the Conservative Revolution Hofmannsthal was arguing for – and one supposes Strauss supported – be effected by ignoring the social totality (indeed figuring it as the anti-Christ) and concentrating only on personal relationships, particularly the bond of marriage? This is what they appear to be saying in *Arabella* and the question explored in the final chapter.

[64] Max Weber, 'Science as a Vocation' [1918] in *Max Weber's 'Science as a Vocation'*, ed. Peter Lassman, Irving Velody, Herminio Martins (London, Boston : Unwin Hyman, 1989), 3-34; 30.

The Little Shop Girls Go to the Opera

In 1927, when Hofmannsthal and Strauss were just beginning work on *Arabella* (1933), the critic Siegfried Kracauer published a broadside against populist romantic film, 'The Little Shop Girls Go to the Cinema' ('Die kleine Ladenmädchen gehen ins Kino', 1927).[1] While these films seemed unrealistic, he argued, they actually reflected back the 'daydreams of society [*Tagträume der Gesellschaft*]'. The films directed at the 'Little Miss Typists [*Tippmamsels*]', for example, reinforced their fantasies that they might fall in love with the bank manager and he would rescue them from their dreary lives.[2] Commentators have understandably questioned his decision to single out working-class women – after all, why shouldn't typists and shop girls be allowed a bit of mindless escapism after a day of unfulfilling drudgery? – but the real target is cinema's effectiveness as a self-regulating ideology delivery system.[3] One of the films on Kracauer's hit list, *Das goldene Herz* (c.1927), which contains many of the kitschy ingredients later incorporated into *Arabella*, is a case in point.[4] A hard-headed businessman from Berlin goes to Vienna – the exotic other for Berlin filmmakers – to help out a friend of his father, who is having financial difficulties. Of course the friend has a daughter – 'ein süßes Wiener Mädel' – who falls in love with him, and he is able to rescue her and the business from ruin. The cut-throat nature of the com-

[1] See for example, Charlotte Brunsdon, 'Little Shop Girls (and Other Women) Go to the Movies', *Screen* 30(3) (1989), 69-73. Gendering kitsch as female was a troubling constant in modernism from *Madame Bovary* (1856) onwards: Andreas Huyssen, 'Mass Culture as Women: Modernism's Other', *After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1986), 44-62.

[2] While cinema might be praised as a democratic institution, Kracauer was clear that different films were aimed at and attended by different classes. Siegfried Kracauer, *Das Ornament der Masse: Essays* (Frankfurt/Main, 1977), 279-294; translated by Thomas Y. Levin as 'The Little Shop Girls Go to the Movies', *German Essays on Film*, (New York: Continuum, 2004), 99-110.

[3] He meant both Hollywood and Babelsberg, since by this point, he claimed, German and American popular cinema were indistinguishable.

[4] The film is now lost.

mercial world means that he has to shut off his emotions to succeed, but his patient Viennese woman offers him a domestic oasis where he can express his true sentiments. The little shop girl learns that, although her boss seems heartless, he is golden 'on the inside', and to patiently wait until they have the opportunity to 'refresh a young Berliner with their foolish little hearts'.[5] Kracauer's masterstroke is to suggest that, since the businessman loves Viennese operetta, the shop girl's fantasy role as an emotional sink could just as easily be performed by a record player. The implication is that the technology of the cinema is providing just the same narcotic function for the little shop girl herself.

To criticise Kracauer for infantilizing young women through cutesy language would be to misunderstand what he was trying to do. The symbol of the Weimar republic was the new woman (*neue Frau*): she represented economic, intellectual, and erotic independence: a symbol of liberation for progressives, and a threat to order for reactionaries. But the reality for the majority of full-time working women was the monotonous labour of the typing pool, the shop floor, or the factory. Not only that, the liberating image of the new woman, to which these young working women aspired, was used to sell them everything from high end perfume to ordinary soap. Kracauer is not 'sneering', as one commentator puts it, at these young women, but attempting to shake them out of their complacency, to stop them docilely settling for something less than they deserve.

Although he came from the opposite end of the political spectrum, Hofmannsthal's view of cinema was remarkably similar to Kracauer's. Rather than Kracauer's 'daydreams of society', the movie theatre is a 'substitute for dreams [*Ersatz für die Träume*]': the industrial work that society forces the masses to undertake has emptied their heads and they are owed strong images that summarize 'the essence of life [*Lebensessenz*]' which are both 'built out of the viewer's own inner life' and 'strikes them viscerally'.[6] Cinema acts at the level of the soul and of myth and is thus able to satisfy spiritual needs in a way that a political meeting cannot. Whereas the lecture in the town hall seems to lead them 'deeper into the machine and further away from life', the cinema allows the masses their only contact with their spiritual heritage, where souls can escape numerals for the immediacy of vision. But these visions are only a substitute for spirituality – and a 'self-deceptive' one at that, entirely reliant on number in its technical and commercial aspects. He likens the cinema to a 'chest full of magical junk [*eine Kiste mit zauberhaftem Gerümpel*]' or to a liquor cabinet, irresistibly tempting but of no lasting benefit.

This leads one to ask, what on earth Hofmannsthal and Strauss were doing in *Arabella* by mixing a cocktail of all the worst offending drinks in the cabinet: exotic nineteenth-century Vienna, the world of the operetta, polkas and waltzes, and the same fake crisis of imminent bankruptcy, re-

[5] Die kleinen Ladenmädchen aber gelangen zu der Erkenntnis, daß ihr glänzender Chef auch inwendig aus Gold ist, und harren des Tages, an dem sie einen jungen Berliner mit ihrem dummen Herzchen erquicken dürfen.': Kracauer, *Das Ornament*, 291.

[6] 'Sie wollen ihre Phantasie mit Bildern füllen, starken Bildern, in denen sich Lebensessenz zusammenfaßt; die gleichsam aus dem Innern des Schauenden gebildet sind und ihm an die Nieren gehen.': Hugo von Hofmannsthal, 'Der Ersatz für die Träume' [27 March 1921] in 'Drei kleine Betrachtungen', *Gesammelte Werke in Einzelausgaben*, Prosa IV (Frankfurt a.M.: S. Fischer Verlag, 1966), 44.

solved by the rich son of an old friend of the father turning up out of the blue. Actually, it turns out that they had the same didactic intent as Kracauer, they just preferred a more subtle approach.[7] I shall argue that although *Arabella* looks a lot like a 1920s rom-com, this was only in order to lure cinema audiences into the opera house. Once there, the opera subtly manipulates the cinematic formula so that instead of offering a substitute for the sacred articulated in the language of the commodity, it tries to teach its audiences a useful mythology and associated ritual practice that allows them to do love in a way that transcends the tawdriness of its commercial representation.

GAMES THAT TURN PEOPLE AGAINST EACH OTHER

The diversity of Strauss's oeuvre has meant that each generation of critics has been able to find an opera or a pair of operas that exemplifies its critical concerns. The musical bricolage in *Der Rosenkavalier* (1911) and *Ariadne auf Naxos* allowed him to be painted as an ironic postmodernist; while before that *Salome* (1905) and *Elektra* (1909) provided a surfeit of material for nascent feminist musicology. While *Arabella* (1933) is often mentioned in praiseworthy terms in more general considerations of Strauss's output, there are almost no articles or chapters exclusively about the work. The consensus is that, although it is well-crafted and enjoyable, ultimately it is a rehash of *Rosenkavalier* and there is little more to be said about it. However, apart from superficial similarities – gaudy frocks, opulent sets, and the ubiquitous Viennese waltz – its reflection of the darker, more pessimistic milieu of the inter-war years make it an altogether different proposition. And it is *Arabella* out of all Strauss's works that most resonates with the critical concerns of the 2010s. Set during the boom years of the 1860s just before the first world-wide depression in the early 1870s, the opera seethes with disgust at the pernicious greed let loose by economic liberalism. But the opera also explores potential routes out of anarchic capitalism that again obsess people today: reconnecting with nature, renewing community, and retrieving some semblance of spirituality from an increasingly technologized world. Each suggests a productive way of approaching the opera, but the focus here on love, romance, and marriage draws on all of them.

The debate around marriage in the 1920s, which centred on the sexual liberation the new woman, has its correlate today in the perceived threat posed by same-sex civil partnership or marriage. Scholarship contributes to the debate in the present by showing that conservatives' claims that marriage is 'ordained by God' or 'natural' does not stand up to scrutiny. This sort of language was already being employed in 1920s Germany, where the Catholic church was arguing that by 'natural and sacred design' the family was the basis of the state, free love destroyed the value of love, and that the wom-

[7] Arabella is the kind of 'modern' 'young woman who appeals nowadays; it is the job of a good tailor not to copy the old fashion but to help create the new': Hofmannsthal to Strauss 22 December 1927 Richard Strauss and Hugo von Hofmannsthal, *Briefwechsel*, ed. Willi Schuh (Zurich: Atlantis, 1964-70). Translation: *Correspondence*, trans. Hanns Hammelmann and Ewald Osers (London: Collins, 1961),

an's duty was to be 'soul of the home' so 'she must recognize sacrificial love as her life's ideal'.[8] The purpose of Elizabeth Abbot's *History of Marriage*, for example, is to demonstrate how the modern notion of the family is a recent invention that did indeed begin in the 1920s.[9] If – so the orthodoxy runs – it can be shown to be a historical construction, then it ought to be possible to re-construct it to include same-sex marriage. There are two aspects of this kind of discourse – still virtually unquestioned in opera studies – that need to be challenged.[10] Firstly, does the oppressed minority simply want the juridical right to have what the privileged person has, or does he actually want the system of oppression itself to be overturned? And secondly, are institutions simply the result of linguistic formations and psychological attitudes that can be altered at will once one sees their historical arbitrariness?

These need to be challenged because the apparent radicalness of the constructivist-identity approach masks the extent to which it incapacitates genuine politics.[11] There is no homogenous identity with shared political beliefs covered by the term 'gay' or 'women' and as such it cannot be represented by a particular gay person or a particular woman. Indeed, the outcome of privilege politics, in which members of the oppressed grouping is offered equal access to positions of power serves to reinforce existing hierarchies. The only difference is that now elite women, who were once passively complicit in the patriarchy, are now active in maintaining it, including the continued disproportionate oppression of middle-income and working-class women.[12] It is therefore politically ineffective to present the artwork as site on which a model of femininity is constructed to serve the needs of the patriarchal order as the prelude to greater inclusivity. As for the second point: of course there is nothing 'natural' or 'divine' about modern institutions, but something important is going on when people use these words that ought not be overlooked. These are often working class or lower-middle class people who are using religious language to mean that the value they attach to institutions like marriage goes beyond words and attitudes: perhaps it performs some important social function that arises out of their material reality, which they cannot simply discard or alter in the light of a consciousness-raising argument – as idealist or linguistic theories of power argue. The inability to express their convictions in what is deemed appropriately scientific language leaves them effectively disenfranchised from modern political discourse.

[8] Quotations taken from various reports of the annual German Catholic conference held in 1929 around the theme 'Saving the Family': Eric D. Weitz, *Weimar Germany: Promise and Tragedy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press), 324-25.
[9] Elizabeth Abbott, *A History of Marriage* (Toronto: Penguin Canada, 2010).
[10] Gender is not the hot topic it once was, but when it is the constructivist mindset is still entrenched. Recent examples include, Sherry Lee, '*A Florentine Tragedy*, or woman as mirror' *Cambridge Opera Journal* 18(1) (2006), 33-58; J.P.E. Harper-Scott, 'Britten's Opera about Rape' *Cambridge Opera Journal* 21(1) (2010), 65-88; and the forthcoming Philip Purvis (ed.), *Operatic Masculinities* (London: Routledge, 2013).
[11] According to Žižek we live in a post-political age, the time of the 'non-Event': 'The sign of today's ideologico-political constellation is the fact that these kinds of pseudo-Events [the emergence of a threatened minority] constitute the only appearances of Events that pop up'.: Slavoj Žižek, *The Ticklish Subject: The Absent Centre of Political Ontology* [1998] (London: Verso, 2008), 251.
[12] For a good summary of these issues see Alison Wolf, 'Working Girls', *Prospect* (23 April 2006).

Given that the enemy is anarchic capitalism and its inevitable ecocidal endpoint, the heterodox strategy I am advocating here – for which *Arabella* makes a good test case – is to neutralize the dichotomies through which inequality and exploitation are covertly maintained.[13]

1) The first of these is the nature-nurture dichotomy, otherwise variously construed across the science-humanities, materialism-language, empiricism-idealism, and the biology-construction debates. Human behaviour is both completely biological and a product of the environment: any explanation basing itself exclusively on either genetic or linguistic explanations, for instance, is partial, if not wholly misguided.[14]
2) Any debate about gender that talks in terms of 'rights' or 'competition' between the sexes is already speaking the language of the market, and has failed. As long as the money economy is seen as primary, women will never attain social equality.[15] This is where biology – typically eschewed by constructivists as leading to 'essentialism' – can start to make a contribution. The one thing that distinguishes the human male-female relationship from other animals is the remarkable degree of cooperation between the sexes.[16] Conflict is a necessary part of political change, but conflict between genders leads only to mutual impoverishment. It is no coincidence that feminism is coeval with bourgeois capitalism, and it is this as the source of the conflict itself that needs attacking not the other gender.
3) Finally, the socially progressive educated elite need to build bridges toward conservatives, who themselves are often in precarious economic circumstances.[17] Indeed there is an overwhelming majority in many (if not all) Western countries for a much more equitable distribution of wealth and a greener approach to the environment, a majority that needs to be harnessed instead of squabbling about identity issues.[18] This requires making the imaginative effort to understand the conservative viewpoint.

In what follows I have been guided by Eva Illouz's collection of books on love, romance and marriage under capitalism.[19] Although her work is better-known in Germany, she writes about American culture

[13] The shape-shifting property of capitalism Deleuze called 'reterritorialization'.
[14] Evelyn Fox Keller, *The Mirage of a Space Between Nature and Nurture* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010).
[15] One just has to look at two major feminist issues to see that this is the case. Maternity leave costs businesses money, and whatever intricate legal mechanisms are put in place by left-leaning governments, they are habitually undone by succeeding right-leaning ones, and often with the support of businesswomen. And even while they are in place women are habitually frozen out of their jobs after giving birth. It is also impossible to prevent some poor young women turning to relatively lucrative employment in the sex industry, when the alternative is cleaning toilets. (For a good up-to-date account of this, see: Hsiao-Hung Pai, *Invisible: Britain's Migrant Sex Workers* (London, Westbourne Press, 2013)). However hard women's groups campaign, there is no prospect of either of these changing while the profit motive remains in the ascendency.
[16] Paul Seabright, *The War of the Sexes: How Conflict and Cooperation Have Shaped Men and Women from Prehistory to the Present* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012).
[17] Jonathan Haidt, *The Righteous Mind: Why Good People are Divided by Politics and Religion* (London: Allen Lane, 2012).
[18] In the case of the U.S., see: Michael I. Norton and Dan Ariely, 'Building a Better America – One Wealth Quintile at a Time', *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 6(9) (2011), 9-12.
[19] Eva Illouz, *Why Love Hurts* (Cambridge: Polity, 2012); *Saving the Modern Soul: Therapy, Emotions, and the Culture of Self-Help* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008); *Cold Intimacies: The Making of Emotional Capitalism* (Cambridge:

so, while I borrow her ideas, I have relied on Weimar-era documents to make corresponding and often subtly different points about the Austro-German context.[20] Her post-Marxian approach, which develops the work of the Frankfurt School, Bordieu, Fredric Jameson, amongst others, treats gender relations not as bundle of free floating attitudes, but as arising in material reality. This does not mean a 'class first' approach, in which other forms of oppression are simply secondary to or derivative of economic exploitation. Nor does it mean that everything relates to the money economy, as in the crude base-superstructure model. Rather that the social totality is a complex networked system in which action in one domain (gender relations, science, technology, nature, commodity market, everyday life, etc.) has consequences in the others and cannot be treated in isolation.

Arabella is a useful artwork to examine in this context because Hofmannsthal and Strauss can't be accused of reproducing the misogynistic ideology of the patriarchy that seeks to keep women in their place. Instead, the libretto represents the culmination of a long-standing project of Hofmannsthal's to develop new mythical form of marriage to provide a salve for a society increasingly fractured by the encroachment of commodification into ever more aspects of life. I argue that in this fairy-tale romance, where the motivation for marriage is money, and where the typical shorthand for romance in advertisement and film, the glamour of the romance – balls, gowns, ornate architecture, champagne, flowers, meals – are all present, words and music come together in the three act finales to enact an overarching ritual structure that incorporates but then frees itself from any financial imperative. The constructivist approach has no critical value for a type of modernism whose very aim is itself the conscious and deliberate construction of a mythical (or ideological) framework that attempts to resist the onslaught of capital. Instead, I shall test whether what seems sublimely successful in the opera house, really does allow for the transcendence of the market that Hofmannsthal and Strauss hoped for by imagining what it would have offered Kracauer's little shop girls.

FROM ROMANCE TO RITUAL

Although *Arabella* is a fragile opera entirely dependent on the title soprano for its success in the theatre, the image of womanhood presented is a male ideal. In this sense, it might be seen as an operatic supplement to *The Woman of Tomorrow: How We Wish Her to Be* (*Die Frau von Morgen: Wie wir sie wünschen*, 1929), in which male literary figures discussed their hopes and worries for the new woman. Attitudes range from Stefan Zweig's keen anticipation of a time when men and women would meet as erotic, economic, and intellectual equals; through more conservative voices, such as the poet Alexander Lernet-Holenia, whose ideal was a beautiful, but not too intelligent woman; to the disturbing contri-

Polity, 2007); *Consuming the Romantic Utopia: Love and the Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).

[20] Reflecting the greater German interest in her work, the most recent book was published first in German: *Warum Liebe weh tut* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2011).

bution by journalist Axel Eggebrecht, who felt the constant sexual frisson caused by women's presence in the cafes, offices, theatres, streets was like a numbing 'poison'.[21] The root of Eggebrecht's rancour, it turns out, was that once a woman was free to have as many sexual partners as she liked, she gained an advantage that men had always enjoyed: how could you know if they were playing you for a quick bit of excitement, or whether they had more long-term ambitions? This is part of a more general concern that if women became 'companions' to men, as Stefan Zweig hoped, if they could come together for brief affairs, long relationships, or platonic friendships, then why would any woman choose marriage? And, although the sudden increase in divorce in the 1920s and plummeting birth rate (half what it was in 1900) ought properly to be seen as epiphenomena of a more complex social change repeated all over the West, in Weimar Germany, the blame was pinned squarely on new woman.[22]

Put crudely, *Arabella* can be thought of as an attempt by Hofmannsthal and Strauss to convince flighty young women to get married.[23] However, it is best to start from the assumption that the artists were not attempting to violently re-establish male dominance, but rather proposing an alliance against a mutual enemy.[24] Hofmannsthal's 'conservative revolution' was conceived as a long, slow historical battle against the bundle of evils that constituted modernity, particularly those that undermined social cohesion. Put less crudely, then, it is part of a male-female dialogue that seeks to renegotiate the formerly sacred bond of love in order to minimize, neutralize or repel the profanating forces of materialism.

Romance Land

Arabella lives in Romance Land. The Vienna of the 1920s was already little more than a Viennese theme park, trading on past glories.[25] In the films no less than the perfume ads that adorned the many fashion magazines, like German *Vogue*, romance had become nothing more than a setting, integrally bound up with wealth. The first act of *Arabella* mirrors that of *Tannhäuser*, where the hero is tortured by getting exactly what they want, but in the female version it is romance rather than sex that they are suffocated by. Unlike Kracauer – and more like Wagner, for whom the sinful pleasures of the Venusberg were deeply enticing – Hofmannsthal and Strauss are not going to belittle their audience for their escapist fantasy. This helps to explain Hofmannsthal's insistence on the need to recreate 1860s Vienna as realistically as possible: the opulence of the hotel, the elaborate bustle, hoop and trim arrangements

[21] Stefan Zweig, 'Zutrauen zur Zukunft'; Alexander Lernet-Holenia, 'Die Frau aller Zeiten'; Axel Eggerbrecht, 'Machen wir uns nichts vor: Ein aufrichtiger Brief', *Die Frau von Morgen: Wie wir sie wünschen* (Leipzig: E.A. Seeman, 1929), 7-17;103-8; 109-26.
[22] Weitz, *Weimar Germany*, 305.
[23] The same level of interpretation would see its predecessor *Die Frau ohne Schatten* (1919) as an injunction on women to 'have babies'.
[24] For Susan McClary, tonicism restores male rational order after female chromatic hysterics in *Salome* (1905): 'Excess and Frame: The Musical Representation of Women', *Feminine Endings: Music, Gender, and Sexuality*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992), 80-111.
[25] Herman Broch, *Hugo Von Hofmannsthal and His Time: The European Imagination, 1860-1920*, ed. and trans. Michael P. Steinberg (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984)

of the dresses, not to mention Strauss's sumptuous score, which all help to establish the atmosphere of romance.[26]

As Kracauer observed, the typical romantic movie is predicated on the artificial crisis that, in the end, is answered with an equally artificial resolution. Her parents' addictions to gambling and the occult sets up the crisis: her family is on the brink of destitution and Arabella must marry someone wealthy to save them. The extra urgency Hofmannsthal introduces is even more contrived: her father's creditors suddenly deciding to call in their debts and, it being Shrove Tuesday, the last day of season, her having to make her decision by the end of the day. Another piece of luck, this time good, means she is incomparably beautiful and therefore has no shortage of sufficiently moneyed suitors. Her trio of counts are pre-eminently schooled in the arts of romance. When she arrives home from her daily walk, the gifts that have arrived from each of them – flowers from Elemer, perfume from Dominik, lace from Lamoral – are all advertising clichés. When Elemer calls – a matter of dramatic economy for Hofmannsthal to represent the three counts through one individual – it is to take Arabella on a sleigh-ride through the snowy streets of old Vienna, replete with jangling sleigh bells and Russian horses. The counts are skilled at generating the *mise en scène* of romantic love, and happy in their gendered male role of supplying entertainment for the woman to passively consume.

The artificial movie crisis, in Hofmannsthal's hands, is serving as a carrier for a more serious crisis facing both women and men in the 1920s. As glamour was used to sell, women's bodies became a virtual display case for luxury items, to the point where women themselves were perceived as objects of commerce. Rather than the sort of action that would betoken genuine feeling, Arabella is horrified to discover that Elemer has won the opportunity to spend the afternoon in a bet with the other counts: time with her is being traded as a fungible asset. But if romance represents the commodification of the female body in this way, why was it so alluring to women? The market offered two contradictory visions of love: the romantic, the leisure time activities that now constituted courtship, which obeyed the logic of consumption; and the therapeutic, which followed the logic of production.[27] Arabella's other suitor, Matteo, embodies the latter. Matteo has been sucked in by the language of therapy: the psychoanalyst, the sociologist, the doctor, the scientific expert has a solution for every conceivable relationship difficulty, if only one is prepared to put the work in.[28] Arabella chooses the silly Counts over Matteo because they are more 'fun' ('Die drei sind lustiger'): their superficial romantic love appeals more than his earnest, effortful sort. Arabella's real crisis, then, is not whether she can save her family from bankruptcy – the external god Hofmannsthal drops her saviour Mandryka into the machine in the middle of

[26] For the importance of realism to Hofmannsthal, see his letters to Strauss: 1 July 1927, 22 December 1927, *Briefwechsel*, ed. Willi Schuh (Zurich: Atlantis, 1964-70).
[27] Illouz, *Romantic Utopia*, 77.
[28] In this Viennese context 'therapy' leads one to think of Freud's psychoanalysis, but that was only for the better off, for most people it meant books like Theodoor Hendrik van de Velde's *The Perfect Marriage* (*Die vollkommene Ehe*, 1926), which ran to 42 print runs in Germany before 1932, and the many publications of Magnus Hirschfeld's Institut für Sexualwissenschaft, founded in 1919 and shut down in 1933.

the first act, after all – but whether she can salvage something of the sacred intimacy of love from the unpalatable choice between the pre-packaged forms of love sold by the entertainment and therapeutic industries.

Rites of passage

Hofmannsthal made a wide ranging study of anthropology, psychology, and comparative religion in order introduce ritual into his Salzburg Festival plays.[29] A performance of works like *Jedermann* (1920), is, like its operatic precedent *Parsifal* (1882), actually meant to be a religious occasion, bringing the audience together, rich, poor, educated, non-educated, and so on. *Arabella* is not that type of opera, but Hofmannsthal's knowledge of how religious experience is generated through the ritual process does turn it into a manual for how the 'modern young woman' can recuperate the spiritual dimension of love. Hofmannsthal's reading was deep and wide – taking in Buddhist practices of the East, African tribal rituals, as well as the catholic medieval mystery plays – and there can be no suggestion he slavishly adhered to one source in *Arabella*. However, the rituals enacted in *Arabella* do conform in outline to the influential van Gennep 'transition rite' (*Übergangsriten*), from *The Rites of Passage* (*Les rites de passage*, 1909) which is used by a number of authors Hofmannsthal is known to have studied.[30] At every stage it will be seen that Hofmannsthal's ritual and Strauss's response was more complex than a simple textbook reproduction of the archetypal ritual would have been.

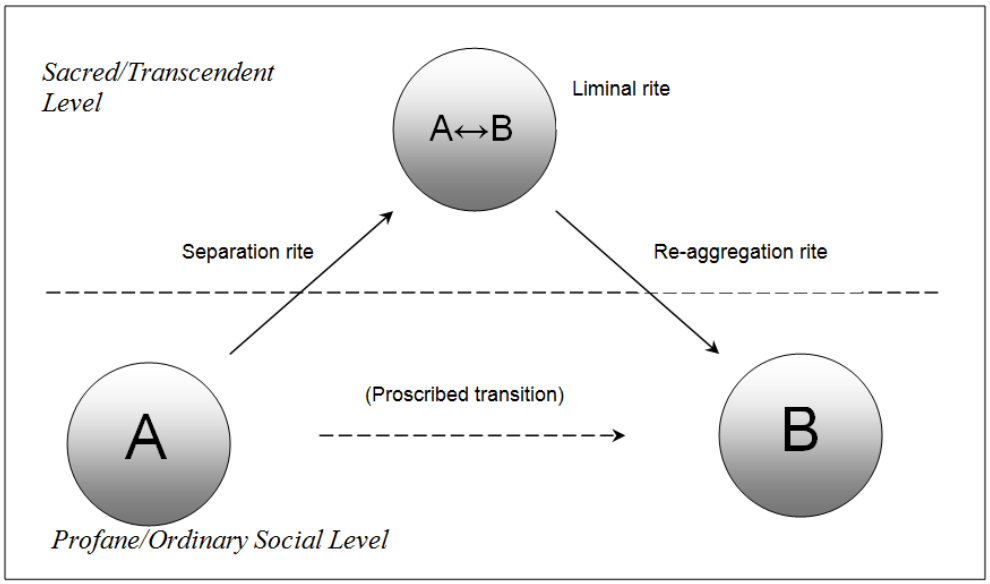


Fig. 7.1: The 'textbook' version of van Gennep's 'rite of passage', the structure which allows the individual to move from social status 'A' to incompatible social status 'B'.

[29] Hofmannsthal made a particularly close study of William James's *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902), important for understanding his accommodation with Strauss's atheism, since it works with a materialist conception of religion, but nevertheless concludes that some form of religious activity is a human necessity. Michael Hamburger, 'Hofmannsthal's Bibliothek: Ein Bericht', *Euphoria* 55 (1961), 15-76; 26.

[30] For example, Jung used it to theorize the transition between archetypes in *Psychologische Typen* (1925), which Hofmannsthal owned: Hamburger, 'Hofmannsthal's Bibliothek', 28.

Although the finales are important in articulating the structure of the rite, they don't coincide precisely with the three stages of the van Gennep ritual process – separation, transition and reincorporation. The first act finale isn't so much part of the betrothal ritual, with which the remainder of the opera is concerned, but rather sets up the need for it. After considering the first draft of the libretto, Strauss asked that Arabella be 'put into rather more relief even in the first act'.[31] Hofmannsthal responded with a revision whose purpose was 'to place the character of Arabella more definitely in the centre, to throw her into every possible relief, but with soft, not harsh outlines'.[32] The music Strauss wrote for her first entrance allows her to waft in on a breeze of detached innocence (Act I: 38/17ff.), thereby lifting her up out of her surroundings and the comically exaggerated, oppressive atmosphere that has prevailed up to this point.[33] This impression that she is separated from family and community is crystalized in the final scene, where she speaks of her desire to reject what is on offer in her immediate circle. But this is not a ritual of separation so much as an illustration of her already liminal position: shoved out into the marriage market by her family, and obliged to accept the highest bidder.

The synoptic concentration of the music in the final scene which layers melodic ideas from throughout the act contrapuntally firstly conveys Arabella's current inner turmoil and hence her capacity for deep emotion. Indeed, Strauss's request for this scene is his most important contribution to the libretto, since without the sympathy that this music evokes, Arabella can seem a somewhat haughty and aloof character. Hofmannsthal's text for the scene has an underlying bipolar structure that sees Arabella oscillate between the painful anticipation of a union with Matteo or Elemer, and the longing for a meeting with the stranger. The last negative/positive pairing is slightly different, first despair that the stranger is probably married, followed by her looking forward to the ball where something might happen.

'Mein Elemer!' Lines 1-2	*'Sehnsucht'* Lines 3-4
'Nach dem Matteo?' Lines 5-8	*'meinen fremden Mann'* Lines 9-13 (14-15 not set)
Verheirat't mit dem Elemer?' Line 16	*'der fremde Mann'* Lines 17-19
'ein verhieratheter Mann' Lines 20-21	*'Abend ist mein Ball'* Lines 22-23

[31] Strauss to Hofmannsthal, 29 June 1929, *Correspondence*, 530.
[32] Hofmannsthal to Strauss, 2 July 1929, *Correspondence*, 530.
[33] I have not given musical examples in this chapter because the focus on timbres and sonorities makes it necessary to look at the full score, and that would require the reproduction of too much music. References to the score (which are identical in full and vocal versions) are given in the form Act X: Y/Z, where Y is the rehearsal number and Z is the number of bars after Y, with the first bar numbered '1'.

Strauss puts this to-ing and fro-ing in tension with something close to a traditional *solo scena* form (and he often borrowed from the Italian tradition when it suited his needs). After a short instrumental introduction, there is a slow, ternary aria with a reflective a minor *A* section, lines 1-7, 16-19; and an impassioned D♭-major *B* section, lines 8-13.[34] This is followed by a transitionary passage, consisting of lines 20-21 in A♭ major and a short orchestral interlude in c# minor. In place of a cabaletta, the scene ends with a fast A-major waltz-like section, lines 22-23, that anticipates the Act II ball.

There are a number of ways in which Strauss exploits this tension to depict Arabella's conflicted inner state. In the a minor *A* sections, set against the background interweaving of leitmotifs, one new motif, *'Mein Elemer!'*, stands out. It is introduced vocally by Zdenka (Act I: 157/12-13) and then echoed in the orchestra. After Arabella repeats the phrase, it is repeated sequentially in the accompaniment. (Act I: 157/10-160/11) None of the chords in the motif is related to any the others by key, and all are individually unstable. The middle chord takes its four notes from a whole tone scale, which, being rootless, is inherently vague. And each of the outer chords has a dual major/minor identity – the choice of bass notes means that the F-major seventh and c#-minor seventh chords feel just as much like a-minor and E-major chords with added sixths. The motif – not really a leitmotif since it is only used in this scene – is able, through this harmonic ambiguity, to represent both the 'strange sound [*sonderbaren Klang*]' that the words 'My Elemer!' make to her, as well as the 'longing [*Sehnsucht*]' she has for something else, even though it is scored in a similar manner, in woodwinds, on each occasion.

Ignoring the cadential flourish used for the last line, there are three climactic points in the aria, each finding a different way to elaborate the instability or duality concisely expressed in the 'Mein Elemer!' motif, although the outer two mirror each other in the notes they use and the sentiments they express. The first occurs in the D♭ *B* section and is structured around a series of long notes based on a D♭ triad: *d''♭*, *f''*, *a''♭*, with melismatic decoration of the *e''♭* before the first and last notes (Act I: 162/5-166/11). The words that are emphasized are the things that Arabella *wants*: to 'see her (strange) man' and to hear his 'voice'. The impassioned D♭ major is given a mournful edge by the preceding bridging passage in which she sings 'For Matteo there is no longing in me!' accompanied by e-minor version of the 'der Richtige' melody in *espressivo* cellos, recalling her hope expressed earlier to Zdenka of meeting 'Mr Right'. It suggests that the dream is still alive, but also that it is in danger of slipping away.

The third climax is in the transitionary A♭ section and comes down the same D♭ triad that was climbed in the first, finally landing on an *a'♭*. (Act I: 169/1-170/12) On this occasion there is a disconcerting mismatch between the meaning of the words and the mood of the orchestral accompaniment. Arabella is resigning herself to the fact that the hopes she had just expressed were nothing but

[34] Line numbers are given according to the layout in Hugo von Hofmannsthal, *Sämtliche Werke*, Vol. 26: Operndichtungen, ed. Rudolf Hirsch, Hans-Albrecht Koch, et al (Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer, 1976), 33.

fantasy: he's probably a 'married man' and she 'should' and 'will' not 'see him again'. However the orchestra is preparing for the A major waltz that ends the act with a double-speed version of 'der Richtige' and filigree decoration in the inner parts and flutes based on one of Arabella's motifs. The short interlude that follows keeps up the schizophrenic atmosphere with alternate four bar units that thrust towards the waltz only to then retard the movement suddenly.

The middle climax, occurring just before the return of the *A* section (Act I: 166/12-167/11), is the true peak of the aria. It is the loudest moment, the only time all three trombones are included in a tutti, as well as the most passionately intense. This dark f-sharp minor to c minor passage marks the opposite pole of the immediately preceding hopeful D ♭ major. Arabella sings: 'It's like Zdenka says: we must wait until we are chosen, and if we aren't we are lost'. Hope and fantasy has given way to doubt and fear. A light pianissimo texture with tremolando in high strings, suddenly breaks into the full orchestral tutti as the voice drops out on the word 'verloren'. The texture consists of (1) sustained notes in the low instruments, bolstered by a continuation of the tremolando in the clarinets; (2) a two part canon at the third in high winds and violins of another leitmotif associated with; and (3) a leitmotif high in the mid-range instruments, cor anglais, horns and violas that was previously occurred with Mateo's longing for Arabella, but here it is only the yearning affect itself that is important. In fact, the whole complex communicates far more through the affective-perceptual quality of the sound than through any semantic meaning or character association contributed by leitmotifs. Both (2) and (3) are descending, (2) diatonically and (3) chromatically. (2) is in 3/4 against the 2/4 in (3), and both have ties across the bar and complex rhythms. The overall effect, especially when heard against the sustained unsteady 6-4 c-minor chord, is of dissolving, melting or coming apart. It is a succinct aural representation of the uncertainty, the ambiguity, the state of flux of Arabella's liminal position indicated by the textural and musical polarities on the broader canvas of the aria as a whole.

Arabella, having passed through the standard coming of age rituals (like the debutante ball, for instance), ought to be a fully integrated member of adult society. But Hofmannsthal shows her detached from family and community as a direct result of the laws of calculable exchange that govern all the participants' lives. And Strauss's music captures the painful ambivalence that this wreaks on her, forced into a choice between two equally distasteful alternatives. They are at once reinforcing the stereotype that the unmarried woman is unmoored from society and without status, but at the same time showing that the mechanisms that lead to this situation are borne of the money economy.

Separation

The separation rite proper actually occurs part way through the second act.[35] Arabella's saviour Mandryka has made his good-hearted, if clumsy proposal – coming from the provinces (Croatia) he doesn't have the counts' slickness when it comes to dating – and she is, with some relief, able to take leave of her former suitors. Arabella shows how elements of her profane, money-tainted surroundings can be manoeuvred in order to reclaim something of sacred experience of ritual. In their discussion of Act II, and with particular reference to this scene, Strauss discusses how, like Act II of Gounod's *Faust* (1859), he could set up a continuous waltz – that is the waltz that the fictional musicians at the ball are playing – and then use it as a framework to house the comings and goings of the characters.[36] In the dismissal scene in particular, Strauss achieved this goal perfectly. The scene is framed by two waltzes in the related keys of E♭ and B♭, which are designed to be heard as ordinary ball music. Even this deliberately prosaic music is warped to capture the characters' state of mind – in the first (Act II, 63-67) he uses a super-major tonality, replacing all the minor secondary triads with their major equivalents, to represent Mandryka's elation that his proposal has been accepted. And the second (84-86) is invigorated by little bursts of off-key, out-of-time energy in the extra odd bars interpolated between the four-square standard: Arabella has an extra skip in her step now she is finally free of the counts.

Arabella's having to dismiss the three counts in turn already gives the scene a ritualistic flavour. Van Gennep's rite is a 3x3 structure: so a separation ritual, such as this, itself has three parts, which is then the first part of the larger process.[37] At either the smaller or the larger scale, the purpose of the rite of passage is to manage the potentially disruptive transformation between fixed points on the social grid: single adult and married adult are sacredly maintained statuses, and it would destabilize the order on which the smooth running of collective life depended if one could simply alternate willy-nilly between them. In this scheme, Strauss's continuous waltz is acting as a marker for ordinary social relations: before the rite, Arabella has a socially ordained understanding with the counts that she will marry one of them; afterwards she is free of any such obligation. In order to achieve this transition, it is necessary that the rite allows the individual to transcend the social structure, for him or her to become a temporary non-person, so that they might re-configure themselves and then re-enter in the new position. Both Hofmannsthal's text and Strauss's music act to pull Arabella out the reality of the ball: little slivers of the waltz music remind the listener of the aural background, but as she constructs her ritual, the pedestrian soundtrack of the perfume ad is transformed into something altogether different.

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[35] Victor Turner characterizes the first phase of van Gennep's structure as follows: 'The first phase (of separation) comprises symbolic behaviour signifying the detachment of the individual or group either from an earlier fixed point in the social structure, from a set of cultural conditions (a 'state'), or from both': *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969), 94.

[36] Strauss to Hofmannsthal, 8 August 1928, *Correspondence*, 503

[37] In what follows, I am borrow from: Victor Turner, 'Variations on a Theme of Liminality' and Terence Turner, 'Transformation, Hierarchy and Transcendence: A Reformulation of Van Gennep's Model of the Structure of *Rites de Passage*', both in *Secular Ritual*, ed. Sally Moore and Barbara Myerhoff (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1977), 36-52 and 53-70 respectively, and Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (Piscataway, NJ: Aldine Transaction, 1995), which develops many of van Gennep's ideas.

The distancing effect is partly achieved through tonal means: throughout the three dismissals, the music passes through a cycle of fifths, moving ever further away from the E ♭ of the first framing waltz, and emphasizing the arrival of the final spiritual B major and its radiant transformation into C# major – a key associated in the opera with the mystery of love – only to snap back suddenly into the B ♭ of the second framing waltz via a few recitative style Ic chords.[38] It is also achieved temporally, and here the connection with Hofmannsthal's words becomes apparent. Breaking off a relationship with a potential marriage partner requires that there is a mutual reinterpretation of the past, reducing in importance what seemed special, a dismantling of a projected future together, and an adjustment of the rules of interaction in the present. Hofmannsthal split these usually inseparable processes up and gave one to each of the counts. First Dominik, with whom she had been dancing, is told that this was the last dance for all time, and that if they meet in the future it will only be as youthful acquaintances.

The waltz theme continues throughout this section, but from the start the four-square regularity comes apart as Arabella speaks. Her 'adieu' – totally unexpected to Dominik – arrests the progress of the theme altogether, and it only haltingly gets going again. In her dismissal of Elemer, she is more introspective. She is rewriting history and therefore herself in the present: She says to him: 'Elemer – es waren viele schöne Augenblicke drunter – ', both trivializing the time they spent together as well as situating it irrevocably in the past. The music (73-74) suggests that she is altering the past for herself too. The flowing arpeggiated quavers in the violins combine with the kaleidoscopic haze of keys to create a dreamy quality. It is clear from Act I that Arabella had very few 'lovely moments' with Elemer; she is reconstituting her dreary memories so that they can be seen through a pleasant nostalgic fog.

With Dominik and Elemer, Arabella revises past and future both for them and for herself. For Lamoral – the only count she addresses as 'du', suggesting a more intimate bond than the other three – her task is to reconstitute their relationship in the present. Hofmannsthal's libretto achieves this through metaphors of space, both in the text and visually. On stage both characters inhabit the same space, and even make physical contact for a moment through a kiss, but the words speak of the great gulf that divides the two of them emotionally and spiritually. They were not in love as he thought, but only enjoying the 'sweet back and forth' of playing at being in love. The way she feels now is 'a thousand times higher' than what they had and something that is 'far away' from Lamoral, in terms of perception and the possibility of attainment.[39] After Arabella kisses him he wonders 'Von wem hab' ich diesen wunderbaren Kuß?' indicating that he does not recognize or even know the woman who was his Arabella. In the previous two dismissal sections, the waltz remained mostly in the background. In this scene the foreground music is constructed out of waltz material, but it transcends the framing diegetic waltz mate-

[38] For key associations in *Arabella* see: Kenneth Birkin, Arabella (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 78. The harmony throughout this scene is intricate, with different types of chromaticism used in each section to convey the different moods.

[39] LAMORAL: O Arabella, gibt es was Schöneres als Sie auf einem Ball!/ ARABELLA: Ja, süß ist die Verliebtheit, süß dieses Auf und Ab, aber es gibt was Schöneres und Höh'res tausendmal! Und einmal wirst du auch verstehn, vielleicht – / LAMORAL: Nicht reden jetzt von anderem, das weit weg ist – / ARABELLA: Für dich ist's noch weit weg, da hast du recht.

rial by being the synthesis of two coextensive waltzes – one for each protagonist. Just as Arabella and Lamoral exist in the same present, but are separate, the two waltzes, occupy the same time and space but are distinct. Although strands of the waltz run through them, the previous two sections resist being waltzes most obviously by being in 2 or 4/4. In this section, a 6/4 time signature is divided up in two ways: as a fast waltz in 3/4 and as a slow waltz in 3/2. The two waltzes are clearly demarcated by giving the two time signatures to different choirs of instruments: from 76 the violas and violins have up and down quaver patterns which has a typical waltz accompaniment in the harp; the 3/2 is evident in the held notes of the low strings, bassoons and horns. In bars 76/7-8 the violas even have the hemiola from the first framing waltz, which is arranged so it is at odds with the opposing 3/2 time signature. This splitting of the orchestra into low and high means that the two vocalists complete the textures. Arabella, with her melody in 3/2, acts as the treble on top of the low instruments, whereas Lamoral, in 3/4, acts as the bass below the high strings. After the kiss, the 3/4 component only continues in violas and half the split cellos but Lamoral has been drawn into Arabella's 3/2 orbit: even though the words seem to show the characters' separation, the music has Lamoral infected with Arabella's joy. The kiss allows him – just for a moment – to share in Arabella's 'higher' bliss through contagion.

Thus, Strauss and Hofmannsthal show that even if only the tourist pleasures of Theme Park Vienna are available, if the individual is suitably instructed, they can still partake in genuine joy.[40] The return to the mundane world of the ball marks the end of the separation rite, but the separation rite is only the first part of the larger-scale betrothal rite. She has also entered a semi-permanent liminal state before an official engagement. This is complicated even further but the quasi-separation at the end of Act I, where Arabella as a free adult is unmoored and separate from parents and society: this is the nature of rites of passage in modernity: perpetual uncertainty about one's position on the social grid.

THE SPACE IN BETWEEN

While dismissal scene and the staircase scene each have a clear ritual structure that can be tied to van Gennep's 'separation' and 'reaggregation' rites, Arabella's 'liminal' rites are not brought into relief in the same way. After the separation rite, she is in the condition of statuslessness, a non-person who is part of a sacred order that does not intersect with the profane rule-bound world. The rituals that she undergoes in this state confirm her in-betweenness in a variety of ways. From the liminal realm, the profane appears sacred, so Arabella's final celebratory dance takes on an almost religious significance. After this she goes back to the hotel where she wishes to privately dream about her future married life, some liminal rites accentuate this positive aspect of potentiality. For the majority of the third act, Arabella will

[40] I use 'joy' to mean the point when desire is met, and the individual is fully satisfied. In Christian theology true joy only exists in God, and so the individual can only partake in joy but never be fully joyous. (See the section 'Of Joy' in Thomas Aquinas's *Summa Theologica*, for example.) One of the perennial criticisms of capitalism is that its *raison d'être* is to exacerbate desire and reduce satisfaction, making the experience of joy all but impossible.

have to undergo a number of *ordeals*, in which she will be ridiculed, her honour questioned and tested. Viewing the opera as a whole, however, if there is a middle liminal ritual, highlighted in the same way as the other two, it is the final scene of Act II. The descent into carnivalesque revelry marks it out as a collective liminal rite, in which the pornophonic depiction of sex in the bacchanal that opens Act III is the climax. Arabella herself might not be present, but the lesson for the modern young women in the theatre continues.

The gay apocalypse

Although Arabella appears to inhabit the escapist fantasy of Romance Land, it is clear from the outset that something rotten is festering beneath the elegant façade. Unlike *Rosenkavalier*, according to Hofmannsthal, 'the atmosphere of *Arabella*, quite close to our own time as it is, is more ordinary, less glamorous, more vulgar. The three Counts in frivolous pursuit of all skirts, Waldner that cashiered cavalry captain and his whole shady milieu, these figures are tainted by vulgarity, tangled up with a rather vulgar and dubious Vienna'. In the finale of the second act he realized most fully his aim of using the Slavic Mandryka as a 'a breath of fresh totally different air' to expose the 'pleasure-seeking, frivolous Vienna, where everybody lives on tick'.[41] The romance that was originally seen as a vacuous if unfulfilling pleasure in the first act, is shown in this scene to be indissolubly linked to the corruption of the money economy.

There is something in the vulgar Vienna that Hofmannsthal and Strauss recreated in *Arabella* that resonates with Hermann Broch's 'gay apocalypse' (*fröhlichen Apokalypse*), a term he invented for the period 1880 and 1918, when Hofmannsthal came of age and established himself as a poet. According to his view the emperor and upper classes, aped by the bourgeoisie, ignored the impending catastrophe and indulged in fleeting pleasures creating a culture of *Kitsch* and *Gemütlichkeit*. Although there was a certain wisdom to this, Broch wrote, 'it was operetta wisdom, and under the shadow of the approaching demise it became spectral [*geisterhaft*], developing into Vienna's gay apocalypse'.[42]

In Broch's analysis, Hofmannsthal was always a deeply moral writer, but in this moral vacuum he struggled in vain to find a cause to pin his talents to. As is well-known, his post-war work is characterized by his nostalgia for the old empire. It is, in this light, possible to read Arabella as a fantasy revision of history: if only the Empire had listened to its Slav population before it was too late, not only would the stale German culture itself have benefited from the fresh ideas from the provinces, but the Slavs too would have felt more at home, and the disintegration of the empire could have been avoided. Michael Steinberg puts his finger on precisely why this 'as if' history could never have happened: Hofmannsthal's integrated Austro-Slavic culture might have absorbed Slavic and other influences in a process of renewal and enrichment, but it is still predicated on a German basis. However, Steinberg is unnecessari-

[41] Hofmannsthal to Strauss, 13 July 1928, *Correspondence*, 486-7.

[42] Broch, *Hugo Von Hofmannsthal and His Time*, 81, translation emended. Steinberg translates 'geisterhaft' as 'spirited', when it means 'spooky', 'apparitional' or 'phantasmal'.

ly harsh on what he perceives as Hofmannsthal's 'German cultural supremacy' – a phrase he uses more often than he supplies evidence to justify it. In the context of the post-war settlement, Hofmannsthal wanted to use Austria's experience to show how a loose federation of European states might function: each taking strength from their own individual culture – German, Slav, French, English – but, also showing a cosmopolitan openness to the culture of others. Steinberg here is following Fritz Stern's now largely discredited notion that Hofmannsthal's brand of 'conservative revolution' was an important influence on German and Austrian Nazism.

This is the other reason for setting the opera in the 1860s: another type of manic last hurrah, the economic boom that preceded the collapse that began in Vienna in 1871 and lead to the 'long depression', 1873-79. The significance of this particular boom-bust is that, the period between 1848 and 1873 was 'the period when the world became capitalist' and the bust was the first to be felt worldwide.[43] Hofmannsthal would have been fully aware – as most of the intelligentsia were in the 1920s – that the current economic bubble would soon burst too, and that another Europe-wide war was inevitable. Although, the opera is allegorising the contemporary situation, Hofmannsthal saw his literary project as a small part of a much longer-term attack on (economic) liberalism.[44] He was not necessarily against a small ruling elite owning land or a greater share of the wealth. Conservative solutions to the misery of the working poor instead involved some form of deproletarianisation – e.g. reforming the old guilds – rather than an aspiration to proletarian equality or rule.[45] The problem with the individualism of the free market was that it encouraged behaviour that was only of intermittent benefit to the individual themselves and of detriment to the social body as a whole. Arabella's father's gambling habit combine with her mother's faith in the words of the fortune teller to represent the parasitic market speculators who make their money by predicting the future and skimming off the efforts of others.

Mandryka, the 'breath of fresh air', is wealthier than all of them put together, but he is an active noble, working his land and his peasants to produce comestibles and other useful goods. It does not take much of the filthy city air, however, before he ends up like one of Arabella's original suitors, overdoing the romantic gesture to the point of absurdity. Insisting his retinue wake up all the flower sellers in the town so that Arabella might dance her last dance on a bed of roses and camellias, and ordering 66 bottles of champagne to offer to all the guests. In the final scene, Mandryka is able to use his rage at the apparent midnight assignation between Matteo and Arabella that he overhears the former planning with Matteo in order to take this soulless extravagance to its logical manic conclusion. His integra-

[43] Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Capital: 1848-1875* (London: Abacus, 1997), 43.
[44] As he says in 'Literature as the Spiritual Space of the Nation' ('Das Schrifttum als geistiger Raum der Nation', 1927), the process of conservative revolution is so 'slow and grandiose [*langsam und großartig*]' that the development from the Enlightenment to his own time constituted only a small moment within it. Hugo von Hofmannsthal, *Gesammelte Werke in zehn Einzelbänden*, Reden und Aufsätze 1–3. Band 3, Frankfurt a.M.: Fischer-Taschenbuch Verlag, 1979).
[45] Hofmannsthal was influence by catholic conservatives like Othmar Spann, whose anti-communist, but also anti-capitalist, *Die Wahre Staat* (1921) calls for a 'corporatist' state: see W.E. Yates, *Schnitzler, Hofmannsthal and the Austrian Theatre* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992),180.

tion into the money-grubbing milieu is made explicit with his boast to Waldner: 'I've cast off that stupid guy from the provinces, and now I'm behaving like a Viennese count!'[46]

Wein, Weib und Gesang!

The oppressive nature of Strauss's music for this squalid Vienna is clear from the beginning of Act I. It might not have quite the 'spookiness' of Broch's gay apocalypse, but his tones for Adelaide's audience with the fortune teller, interrupted by callers with demands to settle unpaid bills, paints a far darker, seedier milieu than the dawn chorus at the start of *Rosenkavalier*. Even the serpentine slipping and sliding of the sympathetic Zdenka, which spells her acute discomfort at having to pose as a boy to save the family the expense of a second daughter, daubs a shade of duplicity on the overall picture. Strauss's facility with musical iconography is in evidence throughout the opera, not least in the cards being dealt across the table – both in reference to the fortune teller's tarot cards and Waldner's off-stage gambling. The dismissal scene and the staircase scene give lie to Adorno's claim that Strauss was incapable of internal psychology or real emotion, but in the final scene of Act II, this materialist aspect of the music is allowed to dominate for good reason. [47]

Before the war, Hofmannsthal had made a study of Georg Simmel's *The Philosophy of Money* (*Philosophie des Geldes*, 1907), marking those passages in particular that dealt with the connection between money and religion.[48] Money, the 'universal equivalent' as Marx called it, is the symbol of means-end rationality, which destroys the social fabric by stunting the individual's emotional life. An economy built on precise calculation of numerical value, means that after the exchange the two parties can walk away with no lingering emotional attachment. As money becomes the end rather than the means, people group together for rational reasons – to increase their economic success – rather than in natural groupings based on kinship, loyalty, etc. The enjoyment of consumption stems in large part from the difficulty in obtaining the desired object, but in the money economy, the teleological terminus of one's activity (labour) often lies beyond the horizon of the individual, whereas what one consumes is immediately available, severing the emotional link between effort and reward.[49] This too deprives the individual of the social bonds that are forged in the joint co-operation necessary to bring the object about. The traditional religious ritual – the archetype being the Dionysian ritual that Nietzsche originally thought he saw reborn in Wagner opera – is based on the diffuse emotional connections of a community (*Gemeinschaft*). The last part of Act II, I am suggesting, shows what a religious ritual based on a

[46] 'Ich streife ab den dummen Kerl aus der Provinz und bin, wie unter wienerischen Grafen sich geziemt!' (W26 52)
[47] Theodor W. Adorno, 'Richard Strauss: Zum hundersten Geburtstag: 11. Juni 1964'*, Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 16, ed. Rolf Tiedemann (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1978), 565-606; English translation, 'Richard Strauss: Born June 11, 1964', trans. Samuel and Shierry Weber, *Perspectives of New Music* 4(1) (1965), 14-32 and 4(2), 113-29.
[48] Hamburger, *Hofmannsthal's Bibliothek*, 34.
[49] George Simmel, *The Philosophy of Money* (*Philosophie des Geldes*, 1907), trans. David Frisby (London: Routledge, 2011), 466-67.

society (*Gesellschaft*), where social relations are the temporary ones forged in the acquisition of money, looks like.

On receiving the first draft of the second act, Strauss thought that 'Act II must be invested with conflicts and tensions, of which it is now entirely devoid – the whole thing is a mere lyrical gurgling – so that a real explosion in Act III is felt as a satisfactory solution'.[50] In the archetypal second act comic opera finale, that of *Le Nozze di Figaro*, Mozart is able to ratchet up the tension because the characters have competing desires that cannot all be satisfied. Here, Mandryka's anger is due only to a misunderstanding and the supposedly guilty party is not even in the same building. What we have instead of the 'conflicts and tensions' is a descent into chaos. Here the increasing drunkenness, sexual licence, and frenetic dancing and singing of the last party of the carnival season correspond with Mandryka's loss of mental control. He is sucked into the Viennese vortex: the dissolution that is responsible for his state of mind becomes the vehicle through which it is expressed.

In the dismissal scene, Strauss illustrated Arabella's ability to transcend her kitschy surroundings by stretching and folding up the background waltz that left her both simultaneously within and outside her physical location. In the Act II finale, Strauss continues with the technique borrowed from *Faust*, but Mandryka always remains strictly within the bounds of the material world. The tension is built in the first instance by mechanical logical process within which the apparent chaos and confusion is allowed to take place. The most conspicuous of the structuring devices is Mandryka's delirious circling around the idea of the key – a traditional symbol for transition or liminality. It has been suggested that Strauss's *Key* motif – just a three-note turn onto a longer note – represents the way the key feels to Matteo through the envelope, but if anything it sounds more like the jangling of a bunch of keys, the sound of a key opening a lock, or even the buzz of sexual excitement that Matteo must feel on receiving it.[51] In any case, the association is set up during the conversation between Matteo and Zdenka, and is reinforced every time Mandryka mentions it. Every time a new idea appears in the scene it always spirals back to the image of the key. One good example of this is (Act II: 103/1-16), where he is briefly able to listen to the band playing a waltz, but keeps being interrupted by the thought of the key. Strauss disrupts the sense of order by having the music expressing Mandryka's mood cut across the diegetic music; earlier in the act character and background music were woven seamlessly together. He joins in with the *piano* waltz in 3/4 for the first half of the phrase, but then in the second half his angry 2/4 protestations about there being 'no damned key' in the music is accompanied by the *Key* motif in *fortissimo* oboes and clarinets – so that although the key is in the music *the audience* hears, it is not, as he says, in the ballroom music *he* hears.[52]

In the second instance it is through the piling up of legible symbols until they become illegible.

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[50] Strauss to Hofmannsthal, 23 July 1928, *Correspondence*, 493.
[51] William Mann, 'A Musical Synopsis', Arabella*: Richard Strauss* ed. Nicholas John (London: John Calder, 1985), 26.
[52] 'Schlüssel' is the equivalent of 'clef' in music terminology, but that is not the reference here.

The system of leitmotifs in *Arabella* ought to be seen as part of Hofmannsthal and Strauss's recognition of their audience's educational limitations: they often have the sort of identifiable semantic meaning that Wagner was attempting to avoid in his operas. But here the leitmotifs whizz past at such speed, or are so distorted, that, although they might be recognized as legible symbols, they constitute an illegible blur, making it difficult to coordinate orchestral comment with onstage action. For example, the drinking song Mandryka sings at the peak of the craziness is a rumbustious version of the Croatian melody that he and Arabella sang their pledge to earlier in the act. (Act II: 118/1-119/8) The melody is much faster now and its identity is further obscured by the density of other leitmotifs and ideas in the texture – fragments of an earlier waltz, the *Key* motif, an extended version of a motif associated with Arabella, and the off-beat chords of a folk band accompaniment. This is typical of the scene as a whole: a wealth of symbolic material seems to be on offer but its meaning is always frustratingly beyond reach. Strauss thus succeeds in turning one of the defining features of life under capital – the endless succession of spectacle which precludes any deep engagement – into an affect.

Hofmannsthal had come to the conclusion early in his career that the craving for Dionysian union is unproductive because 'to live, or to live oneself out completely, [is possible] only in the struggle with Opposing Powers.'[53] But what Strauss's music shows here – something he would have seen in Nietzsche's rejection of Wagner's attempt to recreate the Dionysian ritual – is that the modern capitalist collective entertainment, whether it's cabbies and countesses getting smashed and dancing together, or sitting in reverential silence listening to *Parsifal*, it is based on money exchange and the togetherness it offers is a charade. The carnival ball, in van Gennep's terms, might, through dance, inebriation, and flirtation with the opposite sex, ground down the individual into a proto-human, with the apparent potentiality to be reborn, but at the end of the process nothing has changed. As Terry Eagleton says of carnival, after the transgressive moment ends, it is shown not to be a transgressive moment at all: it was 'a licensed affair in every sense, a permissible rupture of hegemony'.[54] So the middle part of the van Gennep process can only really be said to take place as a negation, that buying into romance is actually buying into this empty, non-bonding, fake liminality with no potential for self-actualization.

THE ROMANTIC UTOPIA

The final scene of *Arabella* has been singled out by a number of critics as the most successful in all of Strauss's operas – equalling the beauty of the soprano trio at the end of *Rosenkavalier*, but surpassing it in theatrical effectiveness.[55] It is also where the ritual aspect, which up until this point has remained submerged, becomes an explicit part of the stage action. Indeed, this is the moment where Hofmanns-

[53] '[Leben] oder sich ausleben nur im Kampf mit den widerstrebenden Mächten'. (W29 42; A 127)
[54] Terry Eagleton, *Walter Benjamin: Or, Towards a Revolutionary Criticism* (London: Verso, 1981), 148.
[55] Michael Tanner is typical, describing *Arabella* as 'a slight, intermittently charming work which also contains Strauss's one passage of genuine sublimity'. Michael Tanner, 'A Master Cosmetician' [Review of the Cambridge Opera Handbooks on *Arabella*, *Salome* and *Elektra*], *Times Literary Supplement* (June 15-20, 1990), 642.

thal and Strauss offer up marriage as having the potential to supply the religious component shown in the previous two acts to be available to the 'modern girl' only in the *Ersatz* form found in the media. The purification ritual, through which Arabella marks her reaggregation back into the social realm, is made dramatically necessary by whole of the preceding third act, in which Zdenka's little scheme unravels.[56] There is no real jeopardy in the drama, the tension arising only from misunderstanding. When Zdenka finally confesses that it was her and not Arabella that Matteo has just slept with, she can then conveniently pair off with Matteo, and Arabella, who is – as the audience knew all along – completely innocent, can marry her saviour as planned. However, while Arabella was in debt to Mandryka for rescuing her and her family, now he has incurred a moral debt to her for questioning her honour in public. Whereas when they first pledged troth to one another, Arabella was doing so from a weakened position that forced her to be grateful for his actions, his appalling behaviour has had a levelling effect that allows them to come together as equals.

The scene develops in one broad sweep, but is divided by key area into eight sections that correspond to the stages of the quasi-ritual procedure. (The sections, which are differentiated by key, tempo, motif use, and orchestral colour, begin (approximately) at: B (rehearsal no. 138) → transition (141) → E ♭ (144) → E (147) → C (148/5) → F (150/7) → chromatic instability (153) → F (154/17).) I consider these in three groups here - the first, the second to fifth, and the sixth until the end – where it is possible to discern the overarching transformation from crystalline simplicity through to blissful transcendence.

The Descent of Woman

After Mandryka's performance, Arabella would have been fully justified in retiring to bed, leaving Mandryka to stew overnight. Instead, she unexpectedly reappears at the top of the stairs holding the glass of water she had requested from Welko, his servant. Even though there is no need for her to do so, she has decided to take something she had wanted for herself – a sip of water to calm her nerves after a tiring experience – and instead offer it to Mandryka, not only in a gesture of forgiveness, but also simultaneously enacting the local betrothal rite he described to her at their first meeting. In doing this, Arabella demonstrates that, while there may not be a 'visible metaphor' to bind the whole of society together (and nor could there be, according to Simmel's analysis), it is still possible to bind two individuals together through symbolic ritual activity. A clue to how this works can be found in Hofmannsthal's notes for his war-time lectures: 'World-process in the present: metaphysical affair; difficult to grasp at all, except by deeds. Productivity of deeds. Only individuals competent'.[57] He went on to raise the possibility that dead cultural forms and religious detritus – the now obsolete 'visible metaphors' of the

[56] Of course, she doesn't make her full reagreggation until the marriage ceremony itself, so this must be seen as a pre-echo of that.

[57] Hofmannsthal , *GW*, Prosa III, 357. Translation in Bennett, *Theaters*, 289.

past – could still be reconfigured in meaningful ways. In order for ritualised action to be mutually intelligible and serve its function as a means of interaction and communication it must be borrowed from the repository of existing societal conventions. However, as Arabella shows by her free adoption, adaptation and personal interpretation of another's ritual customs, what is apparently rigid is open to change and available for use as a vehicle for bonding with someone with different cultural norms.[58] Arabella's deed is the act of forgiveness, but she gives it an aura of 'metaphysical' transcendence by combining the ritual custom of the person she is forgiving with ritual practice that is more familiar to her. The ball took place on Shrove Tuesday, but by this time, it is already the morning of Ash Wednesday and her actions resonate with the Catholic absolution rite that traditionally takes place on that day. Only, instead of drawing the cross on Mandryka's forehead, she offers a glass of water, which performs the same purifying role.

This shows that she has learnt the lesson says she has learnt from Zdenka: 'dass wir nichts wollen dürfen, nichts verlangen,/ abwägen nicht und markten nicht und geizen nicht,/ nur geben und liebhaben immerfort', love is not about one's own wants and desires, about seeing what you can get out of it for yourself, but about giving without reservation and without limit. The symbolism of the glass of water is important in this context. From the pagan betrothal rite, it stands for the virginal purity of the bride – Mandryka smashing of the glass to emphasize the exclusivity of the sexual contract. From the Catholic absolution rite, it stands for humility (ash is a symbol of corporeality and mortality), repentance, forgiveness. But above these two, it subverts the logic of the market. A glass of water is not flowers, lace or perfume, it can't be won or lost in a bet. Once objects with calculable value have been exchanged, the transaction is over; simply giving an inalienable gift, however, puts an obligation on the giver and receiver that entails a lasting social commitment.[59]

When Hofmannsthal said that he 'expected much' from the music in this scene, it was because he envisioned it played this crucial role in showing this emotional connection between individuals.[60] The staircase music itself, the first section of the eightfold structure, is a slow ceremonial march that captures the 'solemnity' Hofmannsthal wanted, by subtly hinting at both Beethoven's *Les Adieux* sonata, as well as the Grail music from *Parsifal*. (See previous Chapter.) Strauss elegantly captures Arabella's descent of the staircase with simple descending scales, accompanied by straightforward diatonic harmony, except for a couple of chromatic shifts introducing a glimmer of magic at key moments. One commentator thinks that 'the orchestra constructs [the staircase] scene from Mandryka's point of view'; that is, the music describes Mandryka's subjective reaction to seeing Arabella coming down the

[58] The archaeology-anthropology team Kent Flannery and Joyce Marcus suggest that in cultures without writing, religious doctrines shift flexibly to accommodate new social realities and that Christianity could easily have adapted to Galileo and Darwin, if only its principles weren't all fixed on the page: *The Creation of Inequality: How Our Prehistoric Ancestors Set the Stage for Monarchy, Slavery and Empire* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 2012).
[59] Christopher A. Gregory, *Gifts and Commodities* (London: Academic Press, 1982), 12.Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies* (London: Cohen & West, 1954).
[60] Hofmannsthal to Strauss, 5 August 1928, *Correspondence*, 502.

stairs towards him.[61] This is only partially correct, and the key to understanding the full picture lies in Hofmannsthal's concept of the 'allomatic'. Benjamin Bennett suggests that what Hofmannsthal calls *das allomatische Element* refers to 'the enveloping medium in which it is possible for a person to exercise an active influence upon others'.[62] It is the network through which we attain our sense of individuality by seeing ourselves reflected in another's reactions to us, but simultaneously in which our sense of self dissolves as we are influenced by the actions (and reactions) of others.

The impression that the staircase music is illustrative of Mandryka's point of view, might be given by the chromatic shift g#: ic → G: Ic – particularly prominent in the diatonic context and by the way the line suddenly swoops up into a higher tessitura (139/1 ff.) – at the moment Mandryka spots Arabella at the top of the stairs (139/9). It marks the little jolt, the little tear in time, when he suddenly realizes he has been forgiven and can stop beating himself up. However, this also marks the moment Arabella sees him notice her, when the two of them begin a period of social interaction. What makes the music constitutive of the 'allomatic' intersubjective space – and perhaps adding the 'something' that Hofmannsthal requested that should '[raise] it [the scene] out of the ordinary' – is achieved through the delicate use of timbre and orchestration.[63] Virtually the same music is heard twice, once before Mandryka sees Arabella (which logically means it couldn't have originated with him anyway) and again after.

In the first, 138/1-4, it is scored to be tentative and fragile. Flutes, oboes, horns and divided strings without basses sit precariously upon a single pianissimo bass trombone. Arabella is taking a risk here, she is about to try and make things right between her and Mandryka and this is a pre-echo of their emotional responses when he notices her. The second occurrence, given emphasis by an ***fp*** marking, is scored for hushed tutti orchestra, and, and apart from the generally fuller sound that the addition of the remaining winds and brass adds, it is the new solidity of the bass that provides the stable ground for their mutual emotional satisfaction. This subtle change in meaning of the same fragment also explains why Strauss wrote it first in the obscure key of C ♭ major and secondly in the 'spiritual' key of B major. The music generates the sense of a shared space inhabited by both characters and in which they emotionally interact, rather than emanating from one particular subjective locus. This improvised rite, in which Arabella spontaneously synthesizes native and foreign practice, does not effect a reincorporation back into her own community, but into a union with another individual – a community of two.

[61] Peter Franklin, 'Strauss and His Contemporaries', *The Richard Strauss Companion*, ed. Mark-Daniel Schmidt (Westport: Greenwood, 2003), 43.
[62] Benjamin Bennett, *Hugo von Hofmannsthal: The Theaters of Consciousness* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 255.
[63] Hofmannsthal to Strauss, 5 August 1928, *Correspondence*, 502.

Musik ist eine heilige Kunst

In the first section of the scene, the music simply enhances the visual metaphor of Arabella descending the stairs, symbolizing her return to the world as an altered person – 'den Abend, wo die Mädchenzeit zu ende ist für mich', as she later sings. In the next few sections, when Arabella explains why she has decided to forgive Mandryka, and he accepts the glass as confirmation of the betrothal, it stirs up memories of their first encounter, drawing them gradually away from their physical location, and into the intimacy of their own mutual realm. The abiding metaphor here, hinted at but not directly expressed in the text, is nature.

It is important to see, however, that neither Strauss nor Hofmannsthal meant to invoke romantic notions of big-n Nature here, much less its associations with big-t Truth. Instead they were yoking marriage to the pastoral or wilderness as a blank canvas on which the couple has complete freedom to paint out their life, unfettered by any of the ethical codes that comprise the institutional doctrine of law or church. Both were fully aware that nature was now effectively just another neatly packaged product, consumed at weekends and was one of the stock atmospheric backgrounds in which romance might be expected to take place in cinema.[64] It is true that in a private note Strauss described the *Alpine Symphony* (*Eine Alpensinfonie* Op. 64, 1915) as his 'worship of eternal, glorious nature', but the Nietzschean context means that, he meant nature as observable material phenomena.[65] Indeed Norman Del Mar was wrong to pin the blame for the symphony's failure on Strauss's inability ever to reach 'Eternal and Absolute Truth'.[66] But what Del Mar regards as its failure is precisely where it succeeds: to be sure, Strauss was more interested in the touristic appreciation of mountain-side views, than in the scientific observation of the brutality of nature, but he succeeding in creating a materialist representation of nature, rather than some spurious metaphysical depth.[67] In this reduced, non-metaphysical form, nature, or the pastoral, still performed its age-old function as an imaginative space beyond the city limits where new potentialities could be explored.

It is not necessary, therefore, to be present in nature to access the emancipatory promise that it represents. Physically, this takes place in the hotel lobby – a threshold space, in which people of indeterminate class, status, occupation pass through in anonymity. However, it not only emblematizes the portal-like character of the betrothal, its very facelessness allows it to stand in as a substitute for nature. The ritual would, if carried out in the village where it originated, have taken place in an idyllic country-

[64] For German attitudes to nature at this point, which was important across the political spectrum, from communists to fascists, see Weitz, *Weimar Germany*, 318.

[65] 'Mir ist absolut klar, daß die deutsche Nation nur durch die Befreiung vom Christentum neue Tatkraft gewinnen kann. Ich will meine *Alpensymphonie* den Antichrist nennen, als da ist: sittliche Reinigung aus eigener Kraft, Befreiung durch die Arbeit, Anbetung der ewigen herrlichen Natur'.: Note on Strauss's calendar 18 May 1911: the second sentence is in Kurt Wilhelm, *Richard Strauss Persönlich* (Munich: Kindler Verlag, 1984), 129; I have not yet found an authoritative source for the first.

[66] Norman Del Mar, *Richard Strauss*, Vol. II (London: Barrie and Rockliff, 1969), 129.

[67] Julian Johnson likens the vignettes to a series of 'postcard views': *Webern and the Transformation of Nature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 16.

side setting on the banks of a stream. Strauss's score takes the couple there and, as the character of the music develops over the course of these middle sections, eventually lifts them out of their current location altogether.

Accompanying the last lines Arabella sings as she stands on the bottom step (Act III: 147-148/4) is a reprise of the Croatian folk song that she and Mandryka sang together in the second act, when they originally pledged themselves to one another. In its earlier guise (Act II 34/7-36) the tonic and dominant harmony, melody in thirds and sixths (doubled in the vocal line for the last two lines) and simple homophonic scoring of strings, later joined by woodwind, gave the passage a sweet, sentimental mood in keeping with the characters' naïve optimism. Now, with a more realistic notion of the sacrifice and pain that marriage will involve, Arabella renews her pledge to a delicate rescoring of the same music. The pastoral tones of oboe and cor anglais take the melody, with a gentle hum from the bassoons. Overlaying this is a shimmering aura combining long trills rising in arpeggios in damped cellos, followed by flowing ornamental figuration in solo viola and violin.

In the context of the two surrounding sections this aura is likely to be heard as the purifying water that washes through the scene. In the second act, Arabella introduced the image of a 'clear river, on which the sun sparkles' as a metaphor for the way things will be when she meets the right man. Strauss used some unmistakable iconography to encapsulate the rushing movement of the river and the visual aspect of its glittering (see Act II: 27/13-28/10). When the 'der Richtige' melody returns here, either side of the Croatian melody (Act III: 144-146/7 and 148/5-150/6), similar background movement conjures up images of clear flowing water. In the former case, triplets bubble up through the texture, split between cellos and violins; in the latter, from 149/3, crotchet triplets in strings and woodwind cascade down through it. Clear, refined, beautiful though this music, however well it succeeds in generating the impression a shared psychological experience for the two protagonists, it is built out of straightforward naturalist imagery, with no pretence to higher truth.

How, then, can Arabella's explanation of her decision to return be explained? She tells Mandryka that, when she felt him standing all alone in the dark, it was as if she had been touched by a 'higher power'[68] For Hofmannsthal the metaphysical 'magic' of existence, whether it occurred as consciousness of oneself as a perceiving subject, or in the form of the spiritual illuminations found in the Chandos Letter, was a human constant, but morality is culturally determined and liable to change over time. This left what Bennett calls a '*disconnection* between metaphysics and ethics': there is no way of rationally determining, nor of emotionally intuiting the right course of action in any situation.[69] It is quite easy to misinterpret the pronouncements of his characters in earlier comedies like *Der Schwierige* (1921) as meaning that there is some *spiritual* necessity to marriage, or that some divine presence is

[68] 'Dann aber, wie ich Sie gespürt hab' hier im Finstern stehn,/ hat eine grosse Macht mich angerührt von oben bis ans Herz, […]'.

[69] Bennett, *Theaters*, 294. I am referring to the two opposing moral theories of the Enlightenment: Kant's moral rationalism and Hume and Smith's sentimentalism.

intervening in the lives of men.[70] John Mackenzie, for instance, is right that Hofmannsthal saw 'the sanctity of marriage and its essential role as a stabilizing force in an unpredictable, unstable world', and also that 'occupies a central position in [Hofmannsthal's] Christian faith', but it is questionable whether it 'has a *necessary* ethical, religious quality that transcends its purely social purpose'.[71] Neither is it true that events are only 'seemingly random' but actually governed by 'providential purpose' and that there is 'a higher force at work'. What Hofmannsthal means by a 'Higher Necessity', or 'Higher Power' in *Arabella*, is that, although all the events leading to the present moment are random, the individual needs to grasp them, define them as 'fate' and accept them as the only possible basis for the present.[72] Marriage, for Hofmannsthal, is not 'necessary', 'ethical', 'religious', or 'transcendent' in its own right, but being 'permanent and valid', it is generative of all those qualities: it transforms contingency, randomness and suffering *retrospectively* into necessity.[73]

Destiny is not involved in the manner of Arabella and Mandryka's meeting, falling in love or decision to get married. Arabella's parents' profligacy, Mandryka's father's death, Mandryka's being attacked by a bear, none of Arabella's suitors being of suitable quality for her to fall for, and so on, all are the result of 'blind chance'. The very idea of a fabulously rich, tall, dark foreigner happening to appear out of the blue at just the right moment is itself deliberately incredible – like a 'fairy tale', in Hofmannsthal's words.[74] Further, in a comedy there is traditionally a moral lesson to be learnt: the girl must overcome some childish flaw or prove her constancy under severe pressure; the man must perform some heroic deed, or put a stop to his dissolute ways. Here the conflict and resolution is not a moral one, but a simple case of misunderstanding. Indeed, far from being a moral choice, marriage is forced upon Arabella by financial exigencies. Once they are in this situation – and this is the reason that the water must wash through and purify their relationship – they at last have the freedom to construct marriage in their own way, to transgress any ethical norms. This means freedom from religious doctrine, from the law and etiquette that govern business transactions, but it also means the ability – at times like this – to transcend the logic of consumption that structures modern romantic relationships.

Permanent Impermanence

At the highpoint of the scene they affirm the function of marriage to serve as a replacement for religion, providing the one dependable constant in an unknowable future:

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[70] See the central character Hans Karl's pronouncements on marriage in Act I, Scene viii and Act II, Scene ix, for example: Hugo von Hofmannsthal, *The Difficult Man*, trans. Willa Muir, *Selected Plays and Libretti*, ed. Michael Hamburger (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1963), 678, 743-6.

[71] John R. P. McKenzie, *Social Comedy in Austria and Germany 1890-1933* (Berne: Peter Lang, 1996), 50.

[72] Hofmannsthal is surely borrowing Nietzsche's concept of 'amor fati' here: see *Ecce Homo* ,'Why I Am So Clever', division 10, or *The Gay Science*, division 276.

[73] Hofmannsthal did not mean that we should not attempt to ameliorate present suffering, although this is what Kraus and Schnitzler misunderstood him to mean, as reported unchallenged by Cedric E Williams, *The Broken Eagle; The Politics of Austrian Literature from Empire to Anschluss* (New York, Barnes & Noble, 1974), 6.

[74] Hofmannsthal to Strauss, 22 December 1927, *Correspondence*, 460.

ARABELLA: Und so sind wir Verlobte und Verbundene auf Leid und Freud und Wehtun und Verzeihn!
MANDRYKA: Auf immer, du mein Engel, und auf alles was da kommen wird!

At this point, the rivers of rushing water finally deposit the two lovers into the ecstasy of oceanic time: the metrical techniques used earlier to lift Arabella and Lamoral out of the ball and into their own separate time zones are again used here – to even more magnificent effect – to place them together floating timelessly atop a swirling sea. (See Chapter 7 for more detail on how Strauss achieved this.) However, even in this moment of hermetic togetherness, they are never fully together – unusually for a love-duet, they never sing together. And then after this there is a little coda that, ever so slightly, seems to undermine the idea of constancy, matched with a wobble in the F major that the whole scene had been striving towards. Perhaps marriage does not offer quite the dependability hoped for after all.

The Catholic absolution rite is a *salvation ritual*, in the standard anthropological literature, or a *resetting ritual*, according to more recent work in behavioural economics.[75] Whatever terminology you use, the purpose is to effect a psychological alteration: the participant, being rendered free from the stain of sin, will now wish to act well in order to preserve that purity.[76] Mandryka is the participant and Arabella the (en-)actor: she has made a decision to act, followed it though, and thereby entered into the social world in a new psychological state. Hofmannsthal accepted Nietzsche's insight that there is no stable 'subject' doing the deed but, on the other hand he wanted to preserve something of the spiritual sense of self, which he defined as 'the deepest enchantment you have experienced'.[77] He was able to do this by contending that the action through which the individual 'goes out' into the world, or affects another human being through the allomatic element, what Nietzsche called 'doing, effecting, becoming', is constitutive of the self. 'A person enters life by acting … Only he who wills something recognizes life. It cannot be recognized by the volitionless or inactive person'.[78] Hofmannsthal referred to this 'volitionless or inactive' state as 'pre-existence' ['preexistenz'], and a person can only join existence, that is become a person at all, through action.[79] Further, the whole world already lies within the individual (as sense impression), but he only becomes aware of it by doing, by encountering impedance to his will.

[75] Anthony F. C. Wallace, *Religion: An Anthropological View* (New York: Random House, 1966).
[76] Resetting rituals like Catholic confession are provably effective in this regard: Dan Ariely, *The (Honest) Truth About Dishonesty: How we Lie to Everyone – Especially Ourselves* (New York: Harper, 2012), 212.
[77] Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals* in *Basic Writings of Nietzsche*, trans Walter Kaufmann (New York: Random House, 2000), 437-599; 481.
[78] 'Es kann einer hier sein und doch nicht im Leben sein: völlig ein Mysterium ist es, was ihn auf einmal umwirft und zu einem solchen macht, der nun erst schuldig und unschuldig werden kann, nun erst Kraft haben und Schönheit … Ins Leben kommt ein Mensch dadurch, daß er etwas tut … Nur wer etwas will, erkennt das Leben. Von dem Willenlosen und Untätigen kann es gar nicht erkannt werden.' (P1 235) English translation in Bennett, 263.
[79] Hofmannsthal, *GW*, Aufzeichnungen. English translation in Bennett, *Theaters*, 263.

Mandryka is just such a man of action, as he says in the second act: 'The decision is held in his [the simple man's] soul with such complete conviction, that whatever has been decided, so must he act!' [80]

The individual must *decide* who to be, and then endeavour to *become* that person. They do not do this via some internal, redemptive transformation, but by acting in the way that they must in order to remain in a continual state of becoming the role they have chosen for themselves. So in the final lines of the opera when Mandryka asks 'And you'll remain as you are?' and Arabella replies: 'I can't become another, take me as I am!' it is both an acknowledgement that there is no 'subject' that has been, or could be altered, but that she has taken the decision to act from now on in accordance with the role of 'Mandryka's wife' and will therefore be in a continuous state of *becoming* 'Mandryka's wife'. [she can only 'be who she is' through another: must have that impedence there: the ritual she initiated, is a completely free individual act, and yet it can only happen in relation to another person, and only from a disinterested point of view

The music here (Act III: 153-154/16) alludes briefly to Zdenka's snakelike motif, thus referencing the character's artful deception as well as the discomfort she feels in having to be dishonest. The subplot involving Zdenka and Matteo and the effect that her actions have on the other characters are a warning about the consequences of not becoming what one is, of not taking a firm decision to inhabit one role and then acting in the necessary way. The Zdenka symbol has far wider application, however: the only difference between her and the other Viennese characters (except Arabella), is that for her the deception is conscious. In the first act, trying to convince Arabella to go on a sleigh ride, Elemer has the following crucial line: 'Nachdenken ist der Tod! im Nichtbedenken liegt das Glück!'[81] In the utopian feudal society Hofmannsthal is nostalgic for, this is how things would be: everyone has their status and position fixed by birth, so happiness would like in accepting one's role unthinkingly. However, in the dystopian modern world this is not an option: the individual can only become himself through pondering each action and deciding whether it fits in with the role he has chosen. By introducing the motif here, emphasized by a sudden instability of key, Strauss is showing how fragile the foundation for these rare moments of ecstatic bliss really is: a firm decision is only the start of an on-going process: the person one is, is a process of becoming, and must be kept under constant dialectic review.[82]

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[80] Hofmannsthal, *W*26. 'Über den einfachen Menschen, den Felder und Wälder umgeben, ist eine solche Gewalt sehr gross, und er wird wie ein Träumer, wie ein Besessener wird er, und er fast den Entschluss mit der Seele, einen ganzen Entschluss mit der Seele, einen ganzen Entschluss, und wie er entschlossen ist, so muss er handeln!'

[81] Hofmannsthal, *W*26, 20.

[82] It is quite possible that Hofmannsthal is also betraying his debt to Buddhist ideas like *annica* ('impermanence'). In an essay about Neumann's translation of the holy writings of Buddha, he wrote that, although contemporary (German) culture was 'anchored in the firm ground of the ancients', it was not 'rigid' or 'dead' but 'living', and a 'new classicism' could only arise when Greek classicism, on which 'our spiritual existence rests', is seen with 'fresh eyes, from the perspective of the great Orient'. Hugo von Hofmannsthal, 'K. E. Neumann's Translation of the Holy Writings of the Buddha' (1921), *Hugo Von Hofmannsthal and the Austrian Idea: Selected Essays and Addresses 1906-1927*, trans. and ed. David S. Luft (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 2011), 125. On this topic, see also See Freny Mistry, 'Hofmannsthal's Oriental Library', *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 71(2) (Apr., 1972), 177-197.

Romance is spontaneous, in the moment, creative; marriage is fixed, long-term and repetitive. But given that it's not a case of 'being married' but rather an on-going one of 'becoming married', it is a process that is always lived in the present and can never be a fully stable endpoint. There is something musically unsatisfactory about the short coda that is tacked on to the end here, especially after the gentle sublimity of the previous music. It is nothing but a perfunctory, chromatically ornamented perfect cadence, rounded off with a cheeky quotation of the Right Man melody. In the dramatic and philosophical context, however, it makes perfect sense.

The upward scales, ever increasing in speed, combined with the succession of tonally unrelated chords is an onomatopoeic representation of Arabella joyously running up the stairs having reconciled herself with Mandryka and reaffirmed their betrothal. But the dual sense of completeness and incompleteness that this speedy passage is mirrored on stage. In remarkable similarity to *Der Schwierige*, where the 'happy couple' are not even on the stage at the end, Mandryka and Arabella are apart at the curtain leaving a hint of uncertainty. Also as in *Der Schwierige*, the final scene takes place on the threshold – in the earlier play in a house, here a hotel. This symbolism is important. I have argued that the opera as a whole can be understood as following van Gennep's three-stage rite of passage. With Arabella's return up the stairs, we can also say that the dual betrothal-absolution ritual that achieves the reaggregation itself follows a clear tripartite structure. However its location on the threshold and the fact that it ends with both parties apart and alone suggests that the brief coming together in this scene is not a new permanent state, but another separation and the beginning of another period of liminality, or more properly, a continuing series of liminalities punctuated by reaggregations. In order for the opera to take on the meaning that Hofmannsthal intended, therefore, the music cannot come to a decisive conclusion.

The idea of ritual that the opera constructs is not the traditional one that fixes eternal truths about the world, presenting things as the way they are in a way that is not open to question. Rather it is a dynamic, on-going social process in which the individual is always in an unstable liminal state, continuously negotiating with his renewed sense of self as the potential source of the multiplicity of future selves which he may decide to become. Looking back over the opera, then, it is now possible to see that Hofmannsthal has inverted the van Gennep scheme: instead of Turner's pre-liminal, liminal, post-liminal phases, Arabella has been transported from liminal isolation to liminal isolation with another individual, passing through an a-communal collective rooted in the mundane. Love and marriage, then, are being presented as a way of exiting the usual social divisions based on gender, class and ethnicity.[83]

[83] Illouz, *Romantic Utopia*, 111.

What about the little shop girls?

Unburdened by a theory of aesthetics that insists that art uncover the singular material truth; or a view of politics which assumes there is a singular utopian model to which society should aim, there is no need to attack the artistic or moral integrity of either Strauss or Hofmannsthal. It is reasonable to accept that they, without misogynist intent, were promoting the institution of marriage as potential oasis free from a society that gives too much emphasis to calculable exchange. What is more, labelling Strauss's music as 'kitsch' is to fundamentally misunderstand what he was doing. He took kitschistic tropes – deployed to lure their uneducated audience into the theatre – and deformed them, folded them together in various ways, to create intricate sonic spaces that transcend or subvert the implied commercialisation of music, while simultaneously leaving it on full display. Without questioning the integrity of the aims or the sophistication of their artistic realization, however, it is worth pausing to wonder whether their proposed solution of personal self-directed ritual and marriage based on independent self-actualization, so compelling in their theatrical manifestation, are capable of fulfilling those aims in the real world. What would Kracauer's Little Miss Typists and little shop girls have taken away from their alternative evening at the opera?

Whatever misgivings one might have about life under capital, it must be conceded that it has been responsible for any progress that has been made towards the Enlightenment goal of female emancipation and equality. For the majority of women in the Weimar era, however, work was repetitive and unfulfilling, and did not offer the freedom and independence promised to them by the mythical image of the new woman. While Arabella is lucky enough to meet an immensely rich husband, the point the opera makes is that marriage as an institution offers the freedom for self-actualization regardless of one's financial means: the wilderness/pastoral trope signifies the potential of this freedom itself, rather than the material necessity of a vast estate – is possible. So, even though the goal of gender equality and independent self-realization was not an option for most women in the workplace, it can still be met through a reconfiguration of the domestic sphere, and the fantasy escapism of the cinema is not necessary. The opera, therefore, is encouraging an acceptance of something that is already a structural feature of a hierarchy based on social, cultural, but particularly economic capital: assortative mating.[84] Individuals exhibit a range of behaviours and place themselves in environments that ensure that they end up marrying someone from the same or similar economic strata as themselves. This in and of itself is to be expected – Arabella was never going to wind up with a cabbie, after all. However, this kind of assortative procedure forces women in particular to play the marriage market in precisely the kind of calculating fashion that they are supposed to be resisting. Across classes men tend to subscribe to a

[84] The neo-liberal economic policies of the past four decades have coincided with a marked increase in women marrying into the same economic class (assortative mating), a reduction in the number of women 'marrying up', and an increase in those 'marrying down'. This is true in many Western countries; for the British situation see: Tess Lanning, *Great Expectations: Exploring the Promises of Gender Equality*, Institute for Public Policy Research Report (London: IPPR, March 2013). (The full report is available online.)

more romantic version of love than women, but this difference is particularly acute in the lower socio-economic bracket: the less financial independence women have – in a market that undervalues their contribution and that makes inadequate provision for childcare – the more necessary it becomes to choose a marriage partner for reasons of financial security.[85] Also, while the relationship affirming ritual itself is – indeed has to be – independent of the law of reciprocal altruism, in order to arrive at a time and place where this is possible requires a deal of 'hidden expenditure'. The glass of water is free, but its meaning is invested with expenditure on the clothes, the opulent surroundings of the hotel, and the ball they have just attended.

The counter-argument is that Hofmannsthal and Strauss's *amor fati* approach to marriage already accepts the contingency of one's marriage partner. And the atmospheric features of the romantic gesture are just superficial: the romance itself lies in the action and the emotion behind it: the ritual is creation of the imagination that happens in an ephemeral moment of vertical time that transcends the horizontal time of production and consumption. But this introduces the problem of cultural capital. For all classes, continually being outdone in the romance stakes by people in the movies: and the creativity on display in something like Arabella is going to make their own attempts look paltry by comparison.[86] But, again, it is middle- and upper-class people who have the advantage: first, they are better able perform the elaborate conceptual and emotional work necessary to escape commodity-based romance.[87] For them, the codes of the cinematic clichés are legible and therefore easier to circumvent (or ironize) in the manner necessary to escape the banality of day-to-day existence. The working class man is often less capable of the sort of 'writing' that romantic experience entails.[88] Middle-class men are also more likely than their working-class co-culturals to submit to the therapeutic model of marriage: if one works hard at one's marriage and it still isn't working, then you have to work still harder. The working-class man, who is confronted with this logic of production all day long, does not want to import it into his domestic life as well. And finally, their job extracts such a heavy toll, that working-class women don't have the energy for the emotional or intellectual work necessary for aesthetic or quasi-religious experience. In 1929, one female factory worker wrote: 'Often I am so tired and exhausted that I can't read or write. I need the time to sleep so I have the necessary energy for my physical exertions. *Intellect is the stepchild, always neglected*'.[89]

What if Hofmannsthal's proposed solution to the interminable chains of weak social relations – the stronger bond between couples, the stronger family – was already the inevitable consequence of

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[85] Illouz, *Consuming the Romantic Utopia*, 246.

[86] This is what Benjamin meant when he said 'Capitalism is probably the first instance of a cult that creates guilt, not atonement': since the potential for absolution, for salvation exists here in the present, the inability to achieve it leads to feelings of inadequacy or guilt: Walter Benjamin, 'Capitalism as Religion', *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings Vol. 1 1913 – 1926*, ed. Michael W Jennings (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2004), 288.

[87] Illouz, *Consuming the Romantic Utopia*, 183-4,

[88] Illouz, *Consuming the Romantic Utopia*, 286.

[89] *"Mein Arbeitstag, Mein Wochenende": Arbeiterinnen berichten von ihren Allertag 1928* [1930], reprint, ed. Alf Lüdtke (Hamburg: Ergebnisse Verlag, 1991), 46. Quoted in translation in Weitz, *Weimar Germany*, 308.

this process? What if the lack of community out there, where the free market ruled, meant that people were forced to rely ever more on their marriage partner, just like the ruthless Berlin businessman, who could only show his golden heart to his sweet Viennese *Mädel* at home? The problem here is that the romantic image of an oasis quickly morphs into a bunker being shelled from all sides. The couple was not only put under therapeutic pressure to have a 'perfect' marriage; it was simultaneously under equal pressure to maintain an air of spontaneous romance that cunningly avoided its trite representation in the movie theatre. And these pressures were all felt the more acutely by the working class, and by working class women in particular.

In the context of the Weimar period, social conservatives' deep attachment to marriage arose out of a fear of the encroachment of the law of exchange into every aspect of their lives. And, since it grew out of the structure, it was not an attitude that could have been changed without doing something about the underlying social organization.

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